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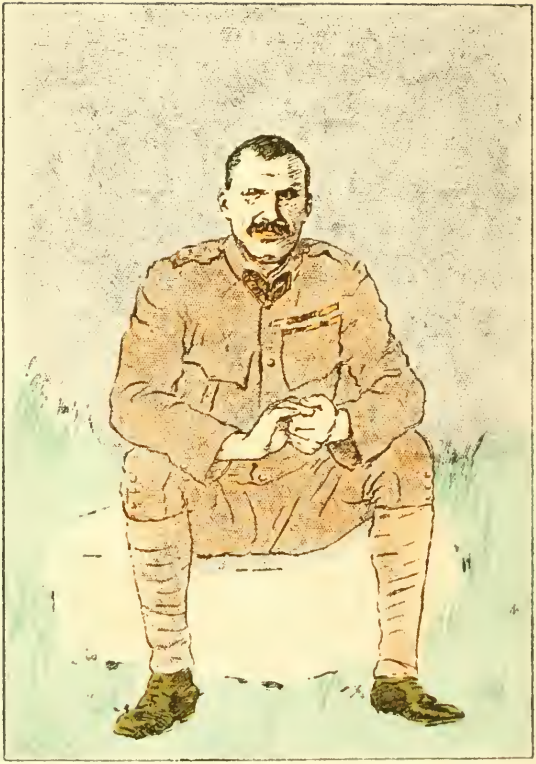

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The EPISTLES of ATKINS

James Milne

J. M. DENT & SONS, Ltd.
LONDON

PREFATORY NOTE

PERHAPS the most useful word about this book in its new life is to tell how it was born.

When the crack of the South African War arose, the world had long been accustomed to peace, apart from small campaigns which had no lesson.

Thus there was a universal desire to learn just what war under modern scientific conditions means to the man engaged in it.

Quickly plain Thomas Atkins, on the red Karoo, sent the answer in private letters to his people at home; letters wherein he set down, as with blood for ink, his outer experiences and adventures, his inner thoughts and feelings.

Many, many of those dispatches got into the papers, and what they had to say of the psychology of battle was, in *The Epistles of Atkins*, grouped, analysed, and thrown into the form of narrative essays.

Stephen Crane drew a wonderful imaginary picture of modern warfare in *The Red Badge of Courage.*

Here the common British soldier gives his actual version of the business, and you will find it shot with a whole battery of human lights.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED,

IN SIMPLE HONOUR, TO

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR HECTOR MACDONALD,

K.C.B., D.S.O.,

WHOSE LIFE-STORY BELONGS TO

THE BRITISH SOLDIER.

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THE EPISTLES OF ATKINS

I.—ARMS AND THE MAN

Setting out to answer the question, How does it feel to fight to make war, to sound the deeps of battle?

THERE is ever light on the hills, a light which even the angry flare of Mauser and Lee-Metford cannot hide. We see its glow in the letters of the common soldier, written when the South African War was new, big in battle, and he was impressionable.

What should he do but put his emotions, feelings, experiences, himself in the heart of war, into intimate epistles to those who waited far away? He must make known to them its strange revelations to his own soul and body, both gripped in its embrace. The wondrous book of life and death had opened at an unknown page; the sensations which warfare, as science now orders it, a veritable crack of doom, breeds in the fighting man.

Simple faith, willing endurance, calling

heroism by no louder name than duty, speaking the enemy fair and well! These things are set down, none thinking to do it, in the brave epistles of our plain captains. Who would forget them, so full of vitality, colour, movement; who could? They throb like a heart beating. They are the common soldier's gospel, and they cry the Amen:

"Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God, and the Lord do that which seemeth Him good."

So the Ironsides, of an age which still hums to us, were exhorted in the "Souldier's Catechisme" of the Parliament's Army. Now, it is the other way about. Our "souldiers" give us a "Catechisme," well suited to encourage and instruct "all that have taken up Armes" in the battle of life. Not theirs "to reason why," but to play the men in all affairs. Here, surely, is the supreme teaching of this legion of dispatches from Atkins, made, by the board school, his own correspondent. But let us discover.

You march with the soldier, not the sage in khaki; only how the twain meet each other! "Ugh! another shell dropped close

by, sending dirt and stones in all directions." Ugh! That is how it feels to be disturbed while writing a letter under fire. The word expresses the situation. It is an essay on Atkins taking up his pen, a sermon on the sources of his inspiration.

Shell and bullets whistle above a Norfolk, and he scribbles to their music. Why such a desperate pursuit of letters? Perhaps a Cornwall explains the reason. With him it is to relieve the monotony of lying flat on the ground while a "hot fire" rakes overhead. Or listen to a Lancashire. His folks may wonder why he is writing with the din of a fight actually in his ears. "Well," he intimates to them, "we have been at it now for six days, from sunrise till dark, and the general thought it time to give us a rest." Agreed.

How to secure a sheet of paper for the epistle home? It is really a nice problem. "Cannot get anything to write on," wails a dragoon, while an Essex private is without an envelope in which to put the fragment of paper that good luck has brought to him. Being ingenious, he doubles it up, fastens the edges with a stamp, and confidently posts to England. His trust in the postman, the

" sweet little cherub " of a grinding, material globe, the Atlas of our day, is justified.

A Gordon Highlander uses a Boer quill picked up on the field of Elandslaagte, and a Welsh Fusilier presents us with a Briton and a Boer in literary alliance. " Just a line," the Welshman dictates, " to tell you a curio about this letter. There is a young Boer lad in our hospital, and he is writing it for me. He talks as good English as myself. There are plenty more Boers and they are kind to us and we to them." Put that soft patch of war against the harsh plight of a Highlander who writes with his left hand, because he has lost the other. However, he thinks himself lucky to be alive.

Personal disasters have one merit. They mean personal news, which Atkins in the field often searches far for, without finding. He knows what his home readers want to know—all about himself; but he is ill at telling it. Perhaps, in despair, he flies to a hollow mirth, or to pathos and some comrade who is no more.

As an example of the first style, take the soldier whose excuse for writing with a stump of pencil is, " We have to employ our type-

writer for chopping wood out here, as we are short of axes." Of the second style the examples are many and beautiful; tributes to the brotherhood of battle. If a man falls a comrade writes the story, in round hand, and sorrowing words, to his relatives in the Old Country.

Here we have a link which binds us all together. How we treasure every little word about the passing of one near and dear to us, whose eyes have not looked their last into ours! Bereavement at a distance is sore; unutterably sore when it brings a letter, all blank, a white sheet save for the opening words, " Dear Mother."

A soldier is found dead on the veldt, hours after a fight, with such a letter in his hand. Death, following his wound, has struck before he can scrawl his dying message to his mother. He could have written nothing more touching than what he has not written. Home and the home folks! Ever that is the last thought, the last look backward, as the road turns up the hill.

Home news comes for war news, and Atkins believes that he has the best of the exchange. " I was just dropping off to sleep," a hussar

gives us the evidence, "when my name was called out. I uttered a few words, for I fancied I had to go out again on the march. But to my surprise it was your letter, and I could feel the blood run all over me with joy. I went straight to the sticks which were burning at the cook-house, and read as much as I could. When I read little Mary's I couldn't help laughing; it seemed to put fresh life into me."

There we have a glimpse of the other half of the famous correspondence of Atkins. To him it is tenderly sacred; to us it is eloquently silent. But we may hear, full and clear, as bells ring, the calling of heart to heart, soul to soul, across the seas. Their great waters whisper love's message in calm or mighty rushing wind, and the world grows gratefully small at the thought of it—a sunshine world after all.

"Write as often as you can," a Suffolk prays his mother; "a letter from home is precious on the battlefield." A Dublin Fusilier is actually in the firing line when a letter, in the loved scrawl of his mother, is delivered to him. Others have forgotten the South African mail; she never. The mother's

heart is in every turn of the wandering address; in every wrong road of the earnest spelling. That son lets his rifle cool, while he reads his epistle.

Again, a soldier is brought to a halt in the thick of a charge, to pick up an envelope which has fallen from his pocket. His sister's letter! He had received it while saddling-up and forgotten it in that hurry. Now he stands on a hillock, fair in the fire-way, reads it line by line, and resumes the war. Who would not write to win such a reading?

"Opened under martial law!" A Durham Light Infantryman tells us, with a serious laugh, of the faces men make at sight of a letter so stamped. They gaze at the envelopes in silent dismay, and think they are very harshly treated. Atkins is aggrieved with the little pink label; he declines to have the military steam-roller come into the confidences of wife or sweetheart. However, the military steam-roller is a soulless machine, and perhaps its interference does not matter very much. Any cold shadow which it has cast disappears in the warmth of a bonfire, lit to let a camp devour a welcome arrival of letters. When the light of morning comes, the soldiers, as

one of them records, all have "another good read." This stroke is masterly.

Atkins is concerned lest his people at home should worry about his safety, and he keeps cheering them up. Here we have a study in temperaments. "You can't believe," roars an Irishman, determined to convince, "how happy I am when fighting! I feel as if it were a football match." "I'm quite enjoying this lot," crows an Essex man, "and you bet I'm going to take on for twenty-one years." An artillery smith, who has been through the scenes of Magersfontein, feels that special eulogy is required to make them seem cheerful at home. "I am happier than ever I was," he insists; "it's just the sort of life I like."

This is the grand style of comforting, yet a bugler boy contrives to catch the trick of it. He would be pleased to spend Christmas with his mother, but the open veldt, and the blast of his own bugle, blowing the charge, please him more. "That's the tune," he says; "it's A 1." It is the tune to which his mother's heart shakes, and he knows it, and is trying to cheer her up. To have a brave heart in a far land, is the next best thing to spending Christmas at his mother's fireside.

"Great glory, terrible havoc among the enemy, but a picnic better than Hampstead Heath, to ourselves!" It sounds fine, but how easily it misses fire, as when a spacious fighter, by way of minimising the risks of war, assures his wife that he has killed thirty-two of the enemy, without himself getting a scratch. "My captain, who stood behind me," he takes oath, "counted every one, and at the thirty-second he got so excited that he could count no more." No wonder.

The doubts which there assail us, as to the hilarity of war, are enforced by an incident told in laconic words. A soldier, in the leisure of an evening, has pencilled a letter saying, "What capital sport war is, to my idea!" Next day his best friend is killed, whereupon he tears up the letter and writes another. It is different.

There are those who cheer up their relatives by frank confidences, by blinking nothing and being prepared for anything. "My day is fixed, no doubt; it may be in this war, it may not be." "Good-bye; I pray night and day that my wife may not be left a widow." "The list of casualties will tell you if anything happens to me. We all stand much the same

chance, and I am ready for what comes." Quiet, simple faith!

A certain pre-vision goes with it, as "I am almost sure I shall get through now, after what I have experienced." Or, "I trust my good fortune may last, but should I fall I've arranged that you shall hear." The waiting on the brink is a solemn, sober affair, nor is it less becoming when we have this glad anticipation of life beyond the grave: "If I fall, I shall hope to meet you all in the next world." It is the parting word.

One soldier wants to say it, but shrinks from the trial so implied. He abruptly takes refuge in the clumsy aside, "Don't fret yourself; you won't be a widow yet." It is his plan of hiding his deepest thought; and further it is a token of the reserve natural to English character, bred amid the silent seas.

Another scribe manœuvres at great length to outflank what he, also, has most in mind, the issue of life or death for himself. The result is strange. "Be assured," it runs, "I am still a teetotaler. I have not had any beer since Christmas. We cannot get any!" No doubt his wife, knowing her husband, is able to draw this false veil aside. Yet it is

an odd way of saying "Goodbye, darling, should it be fated that we are never to meet again!"

Mostly the note is the stalwart one: "I'm going to fight with the intention of seeing Old England again"; or, "I'm in full trim and will fight till I drop, and don't forget it." Atkins is a master of the graphic sentence, the picturesque phrase; he explodes into literary shrapnel. At the end of many days an officer gives him a small bottle of beer, and he "nearly faints at the name." He compares himself, in the desperate heat, to a cooked dinner, but at sight of a dark-visaged figure, on a Basuto pony, is equal to the word-snapshot, "Oh, crikey, here's the Jack o' Clubs!"

Atkins has a wash and feels as if it were a birthday. He complains that he hears nothing but the countersign, yet communicates the graphic news-summary about Ladysmith, "We ate three regiments of cavalry." A trooper ordered to the relief of "the dreadful old lady," declares, "I'll either be covered with glory, or cold pork." He has probably been in the meat trade.

A Highlander is defter at making a contrast. He has grown so thin, on campaigning,

that his kilt goes twice round him; therefore he fears that he may be reported absent while on parade. A sapper pictures himself and comrades as "sketches," and a Buff enables us to believe it: "I resemble a goat more than a human being, as I have hair all round my chivvy!" That is the penny plain, and next to the twopenny coloured—"The white ants ate a hole in the seat of my trousers, and I had to shorten the legs to patch it." Other soldiers have not this fertility of resource, for we are told, "There are any amount with the flag of truce flying behind."

We have the whole vigil of the captives at Pretoria in the cry, "Every day there is the same thirsting for news and hoping for release." The barbed-wire entanglements sing it to the breezes, which, carry they south or north, east or west, find, "Poor old Atkins blowing it out in South Africa!" Eight-inch guns, with traction-engines hauling them, are described as "nice cigars to play with!" Atkins delights in the anti-climax. It is a favourite method of expressing any idea he wants to convey. His use of the negative—"the bullets didn't half make my heart patter!"—to secure an emphatic affirmative, is also

constant, telling us of the English peasant in the ranks.

A shell from a "Long Tom" is likened to a coal-scuttle coming through the air, and a defective shell to the fizzing of a cracker. Mauser bullets, fired in the dark, seem so many electric sparks, as they spit upon the rocks. A string of Boer camp-fires suggests Christmas cooking, only that can hardly be, as "our lyddite shells have been taking the ridges off the hills." This is a gunner's tribute to his own shooting, but it is carefully impersonal, for Atkins prefers other people to praise him.

"Hell opened upon us," says one of the Black Watch about Magersfontein, which is also called "a proper hell-hole." "Knocked us over like playing skittles!" There, too, we have the holocaust of Magersfontein. The drooping of the infantry at Stormberg is compared, with effect, if with exaggeration, to the cutting of corn. A frontal attack, made somewhere, invites the sarcastic summing up, "It was like a party of schoolboys assailing Gibraltar with pea-shooters." The phrases a "drawing-room general" and "Hyde-Park soldiering" are borrowed rather than invented.

But you have Atkins the creator when you stumble upon the expression, "They have put the tin hat on it all." A soldier who has been having an agreeable time down country, with much wassail, is ordered to the front where the bayonets do the carving. It is, indeed, putting the "tin hat on it all." Atkins touches the spot. He is critical of young officers for being recklessly brave, and conveys his criticism in the eulogy, "They're all busting for glory." He cuts his own beard torpedo shape, and after eating his emergency ration, calls it "the imaginary ration." Still, he discovers that if it's little it's good for its purpose; that is, to keep body and soul together in an emergency.

Atkins, when he is quite fresh from England, has a gay desire to re-christen all things colonial with names of his own. Thus the Durban Light Infantry are dubbed the "Dear Little Innocents" or the "Devil's Latest Issue," as the choice may be. "D. F. H." ? "'Driven from home,' my boy," somebody gravely explains, "driven from home"; but the initials mean the Diamond Fields Horse. A regiment's shoulder-strap letters are a ready excuse for adding one more fond nickname to

the curious list in the British Army. And to the hills the same corrective is applied, in the same thorough way. "We have been building sangers on a mountain with a name like Tintwa Inyoni. For short we call it Tintacks and Onions."

A Boer Nordenfelt in action is entered as a "door-knocker," because "it goes rap, tap, tap, just like a mighty postman's knock." A Vickers quick-firing shell-gun draws from a man the ruddy exclamation, "You watch it, Bill; we'll have that d——d laughing hyena let off at us in a minute!" If Bill is wounded his main after-thought will be to "get his own back," and in the interval it will cheer him greatly to hear that his regiment is "making a good name." That means glory, alike for those who have lost "our mess number," and for those who have not yet "passed in our checks."

An artillerist, with a bullet-hole in his helmet, allows it to be an "outer to the Paulites"; still this does not come near to "punching his ticket." A Cockney, who has belittled the enemy as shots, is hit slightly, on the cheek, at a range of a thousand yards. He is lost in surprise for a moment, then his wits

return, his consistency asserts itself, and he exclaims to his expectant comrades, "Awter!" But Atkins, who draws his similes from all sorts of sources, allows that "Kruger's pills, when properly taken, are a sure relief." His considered advice is to do without the treatment.

He "shakes hands with himself" after a narrow escape, and well he may if he has been in the jaws of Spion Kop. "It felt," we are told of that agony, "as if one had been sentenced to death and was waiting for a reprieve." This is deadly realism, and you almost hear the "slushy thud" of a bullet as it strikes the human body. To "tumble the enemy over ten-a-penny" sounds magnificent, but you doubt if it be war. Engagingly candid is the remark, "Remember me to old Bill. I expect he'll say I'm a liar, but if I live I'll show you my bayonet." This is to prove a feat of bloody derring-do.

It is unusual to have modern warfare likened to "rabbit-shooting," and the flight of a troop-horse from a bursting shell is probably a very different performance from the "gallop of a Derby winner." Still, each allusion suggests the picture which is in the writer's mind. Nothing is left to the imagi-

nation by the corporal who ranks himself among "Bush Baptists and other fancy religions," in order to evade Sunday service. Dear Christian Atkins!

His mood is more chastened when he says, about the supreme effort to recapture the guns at Colenso, "You might as well have tried to take a gentleman's honour from him." Such is the note of noble gravity with which the common soldier faces a warm corner. The casual reader of his letters might think him a figure of circumstances, of surroundings. So are we all. But under the raw language of Atkins lie his principles of conduct, their foundation sure. They are as bright as the buttons on his Sunday red coat, for they are the lining to his heart.

Hear him, all generous, on his opponents in the field. Hear him talk of the medals he will lay at the feet of father and mother, making them proud folk. Hear him about his country and the larger duties. You understand then the sort of lights by which he steers.

They begin and end in good citizenship.

II.—WHAT CAMPAIGNING MEANS

Its marches and bivouacs, its commonplaces and surprises, its trials and vagrant joys : altogether a singular school of experience.

We get from the soldier a human picture of what it is to march, to bivouac, to be a campaigner.

He laughs or growls as things govern him, like the rest of us. He halloos forward, or flings a cry over his shoulder. He stares hard at the future, into which he cannot see, and rolls a fugitive eye back upon the past, rapidly getting blurred.

What feelings fill a man who is sharpening his bayonet on the edge of a campaign? They are many. Others may have been called before him, and as he goes south he meets a ship bearing some of them north.

"It is the *Avoca*, and, as if there should be something to cheer us up a bit, she is loaded with wounded returning from South Africa."

Bandages, slings, crutches; here is so much

waste of war being towed to the haven of home. But suddenly there rises from the north-bound transport a great cheer, and it swings over the sea. That is the voice of war's wreckage, that its answer to those who would merely pity.

Next, to the open veldt; not actual fighting, but the advance in search of it. Hopes are high while the sun shines, but come the rain in bucketfuls, and they fall. "One of our fellows," we have the record, "has just asked his chum how he would like to be at home in front of a cheery fire, with plenty of tobacco, a comfortable chair, a book and a drink?" A pretty fancy, but its reception is so fierce that an estrangement follows.

By morning the world is gay again, and Atkins is saying to himself, about a soldier's life on the veldt, "Oh, it's all right; you have lots of variety, and that's what most people sigh for." He worries, though, over the variety of climate and country in South Africa, ever a land of surprises. "Healthy but beastly," is one verdict; "you get soaked and go to sleep in the open air. You wake up as fresh as a daisy. Strange, isn't it?" But go somewhere else, and the complaint is

the absence of rain, and the frequency of dust storms; or, that they have a bad habit of visiting a camp on the heels of each other. Over goes the colonel's tent, his belongings have a game of hide-and-seek, and he finds it hard to clothe dignity in pyjamas.

"Red sand, black sand, grey sand, white lime sand,—sand;" that is a guardsman's analysis of the sand storm. "Yes, sand for the eyes, sand for the mouth, sand for the hair—all sand. And the rain! It makes you imagine the earth turned upside down, and somebody pouring water in at the other end." The ever-cheerful Atkins consoles himself with his popular songs, not forgetting the benediction, "Onward, Christian soldiers!"

It forms part of a Sunday service to which a Highlander takes us on the veldt, with the heavens for church. This Celt falls to thinking of his own fair village in Scotland, and how it will be at that moment. The familiar folks, all in their Sunday best, will be streaming to church; they will be exchanging the gossip as they stand in the grave-yard waiting for the bell to stop; or they will already be in their several pews watching the minister's search for his spectacles. Has he forgotten

them? In his breast pocket? No. In his coat-tail pocket? No. In the Bible to mark his text? No. Astride his nose all the time! Ah! Here, on the South African veldt, there seems to be also the peace of public worship, but a glance around reveals the rifles and the bandoliers.

A Canadian is moved by the "dead earnestness" of the Communion service in which he takes part on Christmas morning. Home is also in his heart. The chimes of Montreal peal far, through the crisp Canadian air; so far that he can hear their music in South Africa. His Yule-log is a blistering sun, and the cathedral for Christmas Communion a tent, wherein a rickety table, with a white handkerchief spread over it, forms the altar.

Thinking of home! "You might ask Tongate to turn my garden over for me!" This is the request of a reservist to a friend, and what emotions do the bold words not suggest? They show, as in a flash, the little house with its fragment of ground, dear to wife and weans. The whole fond scene is in the heart's eye of the reservist, but he will only trust himself to touch the fringe of it. "Ask Tongate to

turn the garden over." He knows it will be done, for the alliance of simple men is set on a rock.

That is a supreme consolation to the married soldier, called away from the land of his own fireside. We have the passage, "For the sake of you, and our little darling, I look after myself as well as I can, but I will do my duty for Queen and country." What better catechism of conduct could there be, than one in which family ties and national duty meet? They are the twin elements of patriotism, a man's home being the portal to his country.

The incidence of war touches the married soldier in many ways. "Most of us married men," says a Welsh Fusilier, "buy golden syrup to eat with our bread, and I really think it's the best thing for us—anyhow, I enjoy it. He is referring to the little luxuries which sweeten Atkin's tooth, and which he finds it so hard to get at some periods of the campaign. "Fall in for your rum!" A man of veteran service repeats the order to his friends, and adds, "Of course we are all there in drill time." He laments that he gets no beer, and then throws out the suggestive hint,

"So we'll have a lot of mild-and-bitter to come when we return."

Transport does not always tread on the heels of the soldier, nor is the running stream ever beside him when he wants to drink. He has the full stomach, or the empty stomach, as circumstances and the gods of the commissariat may decree. When all is well with him he is eloquently silent; when affairs go wrong, he proclaims it, which characteristics are common to mankind. At some periods Atkins finds so many temptations to complain —his word is "grousing"—that an evident despair settles upon him. But the mood is transient.

On the road to Colenso, the troops would appear to be, in good part, their own cooks. We hear of them carrying bundles of wood tied to their belts, with which to light a fire and brew tea while halting. "We returned the compliment and partook of a 'billy' of tea and a raw onion for supper." This is a banquet to the hungry warrior.

At night scores of fires gleam on a hill-face, and when Atkins has cooked and eaten the best faring in his knapsack, he lies down and sleeps by the embers. He has no complaint

against "Adam's knife-and-fork boys, Nature's cutlery," but has a vague notion that bully-beef and dry biscuit lose their succulence after a time.

An Essex soldier, having arrived at this opinion, and being tired of "khaki water," goes in pursuit of a mouthful of cheese. "All you have to do," he records learnedly, of campaign cheese in general, "is to give it your address and it will walk there, provided it does not have sunstroke on the road." He means that it may melt in the heat, as a snow-wreath does before the first sun of summer.

Be it biscuit, or bully-beef, or cheese, Atkins will go halves with a comrade as hungry as himself. Behold that catholic trait in how a Lancashire puts a light—a light indeed!—to the fire of an officer. The latter wishes to buy a chip of wood wherewith to get a blaze, and offers the Lancashire a shilling for the firing. "No," he answers, "but I'll give you a bit gladly. We are all here to help each other."

This admirable fellow is painfully minute when he adds, "One of our men found a crust of bread on the veldt, and you should have

seen the troops gaze at it as though it were a curiosity in a museum!" It is not sent to a museum. Atkins, viewing him in bulk, has his lean weeks and his fat weeks; or, to quote an Imperial Yeoman, "We have our hard experiences as well as our soft turns, and we try to face the rough with the smooth." It is sound philosophy, and to be expected from this campaigner, since he waits upon a steak which is cooking in a shovel, over a lazy fire.

The pursuit of war demands a square meal, but the resources of the soldier are often taxed to find it. A colonial scout, whose larder is the veldt, rejoices in a shot sheep, and the near flavour of mutton. He is even hopeful of fresh beef, within the week; but anyhow he is living by the "kill, cook, and eat" adventures, of which every boy dreams. What more can romantic youth desire? Perhaps such a gallant though withal murderous venture, as wins for a Yorkshireman the joking promise of his officer that he shall be recommended for the D.S.O.

"Yesterday," this quest reads, "I went to a Zulu's farm and asked his daughter, who was quite pretty for a black lady, how much she wanted for some turkeys? I pulled out

WHAT CAMPAIGNING MEANS

It sometimes means weather like this. While scouting on the roofless veldt, Atkins is overtaken by a violent hailstorm. He is a man of ways and means, and he makes a house of his saddle.

half a crown and pointed to three turkeys, but she shook her head and said 'No, no; me want two sheelin.' I gave her 'two sheelin,' then chased the three turkeys round the kraal with a knob-kerrie, and returned in triumph to camp."

A Highlander dances over the corpse of a sucking-pig which luck has brought him, stuffs it with grasses of the veldt, and dines royally. He lacks what his ancestors would have washed the pig down with, but is content to mention the fact without repining. His plan of dinner is quite in contrast with that of a gunner who, surely, must be where the sound of a gun has not yet shaken the welkin.

"We are," he secretly confides, "situated next to a canteen, and with a little of the 'back of the hand down' we can get a steak or a liver or a chop. These with a few onions and some potatoes fried in an old can, make life truly worth living."

While that may be so, one would really prefer the ways of the colonial scout and the Highlander, who are prepared to fight for their dinner, as they will be to share it with friend or foe. Nevertheless, it may be the same gunner, who, being in charge of a water-

cart, with orders to guard the contents strictly, turns his back upon a dog-thirsty, beseeching soldier. The latter seizes his chance and drinks, as it is meant he shall; drinks to his own health, and that of the gunner who cannot see behind, having no eyes there.

Atkins cries loud and often for water, of which the karoo yields so little, and such brackish stuff. "Never waste any water if you can help it," counsels a trooper who has lost himself and is black of tongue and lips. "We had to skim the green stuff off the top," says a guardsman; "lizards, frogs, and eels were there, but the lot would have gone down if we hadn't been able to fish them out." A South Wales Borderer makes a filter of his teeth; an officer thinks he had better not wash in the drinking water; and a driver of the Army Service Corps has a strange adventure in the arid, baking region of the Modder.

He is on the march across country, for it is while so engaged, in the dry season, that the water problem fastens upon Atkins. "Towards daybreak I must have got light-headed; beautiful rivers and waving trees were in sight." Thus he dreams. A road seems to

lead towards them; a road, oddly enough, which is paved with cartridges. How can that be? Now reality disturbs the dream, and a Kaffir's shout, "Boss, dere's de Modder ribber," arouses the dreamer. "Where?" To the left are real trees, meaning the presence of water, and the driver, instinct guiding his path, staggers on in search of it. He runs against a tree, collapses into an earth-hole, but comes at last to the edge of the warm, muddy water. "I plunged my head into it, drank my fill, and laughed like a baby with its milk bottle." Next he has a souse in the stream.

"It was like heaven after being in hell all day," is the sensation experienced by another bather, after a day of war and sweat. He also drinks his fill—a gallon he estimates—and subsequently helps to drag very strange fish out of the river. However, a sapper reassures us with accounts of evening swimming parties on the Modder—

"It is amusing to watch the beginners trying to do their little bit. One is enjoying himself O K, but wanders beyond his depth and there's a cry from the bank, 'Mind those whiskers or you'll sink.' He smiles fatally, goes under with a gurgle, and has to be hauled out."

These arrogant whiskers are the growth of campaigning, for the bayonet cuts out the razor. "Oh dear me," wails a soldier with a fine stubble, "my chin would bring no discredit to the hat-stand of a well-appointed hall." A dragoon entreats his well-wishers, "Don't send any more 'boy's 'bacca'—fags and such like—because we all grow whiskers here." He needs "twist" to taste his tongue, inside its rampart of whiskers.

We get tales of Atkins looking himself up in the lid of a tin can, and being frightened at the sight. "I tell you I do look a fair stage villain; I have whiskers which nearly reach down to my waist." We hear eternally of the picturesque effects which forced marches and rough country produce upon boots and breeches and tunics. "Why, we're like mountain brigands, or rather like a regiment of Rip van Winkles." A Buff compares himself to a Crusoe, but finds solace in the view that others are in the same plight.

"Oh we do look nobs," exclaims an amateur tailor whose clothes are out at places too numerous to mention. A colonial gets into his boots gently, lest he should push the soles off, but a Cockney exclaims to the

world, " What a show we'd make for recruiting! We'd knock the sergeants at St. George's barracks altogether! " No doubt, if we have regard to the melancholy tidings of a Borderer who, amid the ongoings following the relief of Kimberley, has to sit still and hide his nakedness.

Here is the comedy of war, and does a Royal Engineer who confesses to wearing three shirts at once, take us from it? He cannot carry them as a bundle, being well-laden otherwise, and so he puts on the three.

" When the top one is dirty I'll chuck him away, and wear the next; then the third, all of which will save washing." Yet Atkins finds as much diversion in the washing of his shirts, as in a Modder swim. He wears buff as gracefully as khaki.

A sergeant of the Howitzers has read Dickens, and recalls the case of the poor lodger who swilled his shirt and waited while it dried. Atkins, on the banks of the Modder, fills in the wait with a game at penny nap. Once the enemy disturbs the washing day, it may be to his own confusion, and in the hurry there is to welcome him, shirts get mixed. The wash-tub with a rifle lying beside it; the

river bath, with a comrade, revolver in hand, keeping watch! These be fresh sensations to place against the commonplaces of soldiering, nor are they alone.

The mail-bag from the campaign in Natal has news of hailstones big as hen-eggs and harder, of scorpions and tarantula spiders. Atkins has no use for the hailstones, and thinks them too serious to joke about, but the scorpions and tarantulas stir his sporting instincts. "Sometimes we get a specimen of each, and placing them two in a box, watch a battle to the death." The scorpion, being bigger, is invariably the victor, but the struggle does not lack excitement. The cock-pit is to the "Open Veldt Hotel, proprietors, Breeze & Co.," what a bowling alley is to an hostelry in a London suburb.

At first an attempt is made to extract sport from the flies, but it is abandoned in despair. "Everything," a letter-writer curses heroically, "is flies, flies, flies! In the tea, in the soup, on the meat, on the bread! For breakfast, for dinner, for tea! They were the plague of Pharaoh once; now they are the plague of the soldiers in South Africa." The discovery is made by a Middlesex that the flies have a

preference for new-comers, for those whom the campaign has not toughened into leather. It is an intelligible choice.

A Middlesex wants fly-papers, "catch 'em alive o's," served out with the rations, and strong measures taken against the mosquitoes. They sting as if they were armed with spurs, but their song to the night is more melodious than that of an army of frogs. A dirge addressed by them to a campful of yeomen is tolerated, but when they crawl below the rugs, and clamber coldly across the sleepers, boots and bayonets are seized in self-defence. Great is the execution, but what matters it, if, as with the flies, a myriad of living frogs come to the funeral of the dead.

Contrast these gleanings from a far-flung field, so rich and poor in climates, with the happy lot of a C.I.V. He is doing duty at some outpost on the Orange River, and quite imagines he might be looking on the Thames from Richmond Hill. Masses of yellow flowers make a garden of the place, and gorgeous birds which sing not, and others less gorgeous which do, fill the bushes with life. "No boating party at Windsor or Epping," he continues, "were ever happier than we fellows at picquet

on the Orange River." War has its peace spots, its back waters, which the pour of blood does not redden.

A regular of few words is indifferent where the tide of strife carries him, his grand wonder being that he grows absolutely fat on nothing. "I am A 1 myself," he says, "and putting on weight. It seems funny, but I'm getting an awful size. I suppose it's the fresh air and plenty of exercise." He rises early to catch the dew of the veldt, wherewith to wash his face. Or rather it is a lick and a promise, and not even that if the sun has already come forth, as from the nether furnace. But notwithstanding this early rising our regular goes on getting stout, and he may be left in the process.

Turn to the supreme comfort which Atkins has amid all that befalls him; and who can fail to guess it? It is his pipe. We find it ever in his cheek, or his cheek crying for it. There is Ladysmith, where the besieged smoke dried tea-leaves in default of anything with a truer taste. When events are at high pressure, men, if they be smokers, want the silent companionship. Dower Atkins thus, and the world may revolve or stand still, for all he cares.

"You talk of shot and shell," a soldier confides, "but I give little notice to them if I can get a smoke. Then I'm happy." And Providence in another sense may be in the pipe. "While lying there," a smoker records, "I lifted my head to fill my pipe. Why, would you believe it, a bullet hit the very place where my head had been, and banged flat on my rifle. Said I to myself, said I, 'That smoke saved my life.'"

A corporal of a Maxim-gun detachment had intended to drop smoking, "But I'm jolly glad I brought some 'baccy with me. It's the only thing we have." Not every one is so fortunate, else we should not hear of the substitutes for it, or the plaintive, "Think of men breaking up their clay pipes and chewing them in order to get a taste of tobacco." Essentially Atkins is a man of feeling, and his long cry for "a smoke" is a sign of this. To him it is the friend of his rounds by morn or night, the friend with whom he can talk and always be understood.

So fortified, he gaily rides the veldt, reading the face of that strange land, knowing not the day nor the hour.

III.—BATTLE IN BEING

The series of pictures it is to the eye, its near rattle and far roar to the ear, and its wearing strain upon the nerves.

WHAT, to the soldier, is a battle in being? How does it seem to him as he beholds it? How does he feel when he is in the heart of it? One picture comes of vision, the other through sensation, but the two are inseparable. We approach them by gradual stages.

"Old man," a volunteer salutes a friend at home, "when you are comfortable in your bed, have a thought for Bill doing his lonely sentry-go, with the ground for his bed and the starry heavens for his covering, fifty rounds in his bandolier, and a Lee-Metford his close companion."

Sentry-go on the veldt! It is the road to the battle, part of the training which brings Atkins to the ordeal. It has variety. A sentry reports the countersign one night to be "weary," and hints that somebody meant to be sarcastic. "Why not weary, worn and sad?" he asks.

Another sentry comes to a halt on hearing a noise in a thicket, followed by the flight of a shadow from it. He challenges, gets no reply, challenges anew, and is about to do so a third time, when the shadow appears again, and he fires. There is a squeal, and next morning a pig is wandering round the camp on three legs, carrying the fourth. "Who shot the pig?" is the question, and our sentry has to meet the laughter of his comrades and the anger of the owner, a neighbouring farmer.

A camp is roused by a false alarm and loses its night's sleep; which is still more experience for Atkins, shaping him to his surroundings. The occasion of the alarm has been a stampede of mules, foolish beasts that way, and the cry of a dreaming man, "They are on us!" Soon the mules are in obedience and peace, and, moreover, the dominion of Atkins over the lower kingdom goes wider. He learns to harness Nature to sentry-go, to make even the wild animals his allies. In the daytime he watches the baboons at play on the hills, knowing they will be the first to scent the approach of an enemy. When the guardian baboon cries shrilly, and his flock scamper for

the kloof, Atkins comes to "'tention" and fondles his rifle.

"Our men on sentry-go," an Essex private says of the outposts, "are sniping away like old boots, and I can assure you we enjoy the sport immensely. But don't run away with the idea that we do all the sniping, for I can assure you the Boers do their fair share."

A shell may even arrive with a hiss and a bang, at the moment Atkins is crooning to himself, "Let 'em all come." He means it, the lust for a fight being in him most of all when he has trudged a long road in search of it. The wind has been in his heels, and he prays for the whirlwind to break. Those marches are an asset of battle—an asset realised beforehand, though often there may be no better return for them than skirmishes. "You have no idea what this war is like," says a lancer. "You are getting along under the hills, and all at once there is a shower of bullets, just like a shower of hailstones, and you can't see anybody." Perhaps the hum of the Mausers is accompanied by the plop-plop-plop-plop-plop, five shots in quick succession, of a quick-firer. The kopjes speak, and are

spoken back to sharply; but let an artilleryman catch the echoes:

"They start ping-ping, pop-pop, bang-bang-bang; presently off goes some one's head." "Good shot!" calls somebody else; "have another go at him. That's got him."

These are the stages of battle to Ladysmith, to Kimberley, to Mafeking. Troopers are begrimed like dustmen, the gay tartans of Highlanders are daubed out of recognition; all is drab khaki, alike in colour and feeling. "We were so worn out that when we halted, some of us would fall asleep as we stood, and tumble down." There we have the toil of the march, but it is less trying to bear than darkness lying over a strange region which must be covered before dawn, if the surprise is to succeed.

"No one is allowed to speak, to strike a light, to smoke; we move along like a deaf and dumb army."

That is the advance at Magersfontein, from which, as from the wide campaign, we have the complaint, "You cannot see the enemy. He shoots at you, but you look in vain for him. It is fighting against rocks. You have nobody to shoot at, damn it!" Atkins

demands with indignation, "Why doesn't the Boer come out into the open, and fight us fair in the teeth?" But later he himself is mastering the kopjes and the krantzs, as natural fortresses.

Often we hear of men crying with rage because they cannot see an enemy to fire at. Bullets sing out of space, to hit, or to miss and pass on with a moan of disappointment. Where are they who snap the eager triggers home? The hills answer only in vague numbers; the kopjes hold phantom men who fire rifles, raising not a wrack of smoke to tell from where. "You have nobody to shoot at, damn it!"

"It gets on the nerves," somebody expresses the thing, "this idea of an invisible foe, who lies in the grass, or behind a rock, and shoots, shoots, shoots. An English soldier of imaginative mind, might come to think of the enemy as a sort of nineteenth-century invention, a vapour, like the clourless smoke of the new powder, or a demon or an essence; and when he had thought all that, he would go mad unless a Boer bullet caught him, as it catches so many, nose down in the sand, when they are hiding behind sage bushes."

Modern warfare is an eerie trade. A Northampton enters it to describe what has befallen him during the hottest part of an advance. As he and others lie on the ground they show their helmets above cover, and thereupon Mauser bullets crack through them. Men on some distant hillside are calmly taking aim at the headgear, the owners of which know no more. The invisible is full of awe, but more immediately a cause for grumbling, hot as the rifle fire itself.

"The Boers," we get this vignette, "were pouring Mauser bullets into us as quick as peas; we saw nothing, yet could not have been quicker served in a cookshop."

It is said lightly, but not unthinkingly; he means it is easier to look death in the face than to blindly await it. Hearken to the devilish scream of a big shell, a sound disturbing to the staunchest nerve. First the shell outruns its noise, then the noise creeps up upon it, and finally, if the flight of the missile be long enough, the report gets ahead. So a listener in his earth burrow, marshals the procession of a Creusot shell through the air.

With all this discipline for battle, this breeding to its bugle call, there goes the

Battle in Being

A bird's-eye view of a battle embraces miles of country, which may be rugged, as here, or rolling veldt, dotted with kopjes. The smoke of the big guns curls in the wind, and the fighting men appear so many specks against earth and sky.

merry touch, the jocund heart. "Better than a pantomime," is the saying we have about an attack upon a kopje, where it is a matter of jumping from rock to rock, "just like the Zulus." Smoking, laughing, the shouting of one to another, but nowhere an opening for cavalry. "All you can do in this country," a hussar bewails, "is to sit still and stick it, whereas in any other country you could have a dab in." He needs to have splendid resignation.

"Look out below!" It is a shout from the sentry atop a kopje which, for the good of affairs in general, has been held three weary weeks against splashes of shell-fire. The garrison are cooking, and they have just time to drop their slices of meat into the fire and fly to the safety of their burrows. Whiz-z-z, bang, crash! The shell has burst, its fumes outrage the atmosphere; and now to turn the joints, and get back to cover before the next shot! The bobbing out and in has its risks, besides its terrors; the risks which curious rabbits run when dogs are near their holes.

"Good God!" exclaims a man, caught out of shelter, but when the shell has blown itself to pieces he is still safe, and he calmly pro-

ceeds to gather up the fragments. He argues that these are his by all manner of right, and nobody is anxious to come into the open and dispute the claim with him. "Very often," a Welshman writes of such an experience, "we have a firework entertainment, much the same as you get at home. There is this difference, however, that we are content to behold it from behind rocks."

"A game of draughts!" It is to this a driver of the Royal Artillery compares an advance against the enemy, who, being driven from one position, simply occupy the next. But combat, sullen, savage, a giant, one day leaps from these battlings, and we go with Atkins and his friends to behold it, in such spirit towards gallantry as the following witness:

"To see those great bearded warriors charging up a mountain, taking death as nothing, was a privilege worth ten years of ordinary life. In the moment of battle there is something godlike in these men; their faces change to iron, and they seem Fate itself!"

It is a gilt-edged tribute to the British infantry, and well earned, but how differently a colonial trooper phrases his praise. His

opinion of the rank and file rises on acquaintance with them, like a thermometer set against a warm sun. He calls them grand, and clinches this deliverance with the odd, unexpected remark, "They 'moon' along as if they were going to have a drink." Here is the pinnacle of eulogy in the language of the street.

But follow the infantry as they make battle, if it be possible, for they seem to be little brown ants on the plain. And when they stop your eye loses them. So testifies a spectator, and another confirms him in the sentence, "You have a lot of little moving dots, mere lumps of mud, coming creeping along the scorched and dusty ground." There is a shrill whistle, and the lumps of mud assume the form of men who rush up the side of a kopje. It is a set battle, and as a gunner, carried away by the sight, exclaims, "Talk about a football match, it isn't in it."

He is probably thinking of Elandslaagte, with its beat of drum, blare of bugle, and quick step to the bagpipes; a field hastening to close quarters and hot blood. Paardeberg is not all in that style; it stands also for the new model. "I fancy it's a wash out for

Cronje, now he's surrounded," says a Highlander. Wash out! How expressive! "Take a basin," the contrast is continued by another Highland hand, "put Cronje and his men at the bottom of it, and Roberts and his guns round the edge, and there you have the situation." That is how Paardeberg looks, and we are given an equally clear picture of an out-flanking operation.

To right and left clouds of horsemen stretch away, and when they have gone far enough, they will begin to come together again. The obstacle to a direct advance sits tight, but only for a little, because to linger unduly might be to stay altogether. These doings are not for the eye so much as for the mind's eye, not a spectacle glowing with colour, but a calculation of supreme nicety. Vision is limited, and modern warfare is a far-spread game. It gets away from the picturesque, though Atkins is anxious to linger there, true to the glorious tints of yore.

He remains a man, even if it be necessary for him to be a cog in a great machine. Nothing may interfere with his individuality; with his keen personality. His uniform does not crush the humanities out of him. Is the

occasion sad? He loses comrades on either side, and reflects, " This is being spared if you like! " Is the occasion laughable, because decked in a splendid exaggeration? A gunner spies a bunch of the enemy digging trenches, and lays his lyddite gun straight at them. When the green fumes have lifted he jots down the entry, " No movement, poor chaps; they dug their own graves and merely wanted filling in."

" Whilst lying still and watching them," another chronicler assures us, " we had a competition as to how many we could ' snipe ' off, and as they fell to my rifle I thought of you and my other dear old chum, and said, ' One for him, one for you, and one for me.' " Those who curse an unseen enemy must envy the man who sees so effectually. Yet may a battle, wherein all is possible, not breed such things? Whether or not, let the vivid imagination add them to history. The eye cannot pierce a stone wall, but that is no reason why the imagination should not get round a kopje.

There is no need for the exercise at Colenso, of which a bandsman catches the music, " The scene though terrible was grand, and the *crescendo* in Rossini's ' William Tell ' was fairly

eclipsed by the effect of the guns." We estimate events, however novel, however strange, by the conditions of our everyday life and calling. What would Colenso have been like at night, in darkness instead of in daylight? A second commentator wonders! It is splendid in the light of morning, with its roll of rifle fire, its roar of cannon, its bonfire of bursting shell. In the dark it would, the writer fancies, be grander, just as a veldt fire seems to burn fiercer then; but always it is cruel, terrible, the magnificence of hell.

How often Atkins reaches towards the nether unknown, searching for what will express his ideas on a hot battle! A thunderstorm takes up the racket of Paardeberg, outbullying even the lyddite's avalanche. Atkins gives up the scene in despair of finding adequate words, but only for an instant, since he is soon naming it " a living hell," or " hell upon earth." It smokes green, fumes pollute the air, and there is the low moan of the wounded. That is the still small voice of battle; the hymn which keeps it human, the safeguard against savagery. A man of the Modder engagement confesses to " a good hard heart," but that the sight of the wounded gives him a " twist-

ing." It set him against war; the agony of a battle lingers for hours in his ears. To his unstrung nerves a cart rattling on the stones seems to be rifle fire, and an empty tin rolling down a hill has a sound as of distant artillery.

There we come to the feel of battle, to its pulse under the sensations. "It is grand," says a Highlander, "to watch a battle, while lying safe on a hill out of range, and I think this accounts for the many high-falutin' descriptions I have read from time to time. It wears a different aspect when you are in the fighting line, with the bullets dancing hornpipes around you." Such is the transition from Spion Kop at a distance, all illuminations, to Spion Kop on the top, all thirst and blood and death.

"Ammunition wanted!" A Lancashire Fusilier, who is in the thick of Spion Kop, passes the cry. "Water wanted for the wounded!" Where to get it? "Send reinforcements for the right!" Yes, but where are they? "Then the men were on the point of going for it, neck or nothing, with the bayonet, when the news ran along, 'Reinforcements are coming!' and such a cheer

went up. You can imagine it from men who believed they were cut off; it was soul-stirring." Some, many, go under; they drop quietly, unflinchingly, concerned only to imitate the mangled gunner of Ladysmith, who exhorted his comrades to "Throw me out of the way, lads!"

A Warwick has his sensations of battle before it actually begins, and the rest appeals to him as might a parade. It is the suspense that tries, the waiting on events until they bring your turn of strife. Is a hill being assailed? "There seems to be a glorious fascination which draws you on and on, until you either fall or gain the position." But what happens to a body of men; how is the battle-picture trodden out by them?

"Oh my!" we hear about Belmont, "thousands of bullets came flying around our heads, and it was awful. Men were throwing up their hands and moaning, and one would cry, 'I am shot!'" Not a lament not a lowering of courage, simply the instinctive utterance of staggered human nature. Somebody will be at his side with a sip of water, and lint wherewith to bind up his wound. "Get away," other wounded soldiers

may call; "you are drawing all their fire upon us."

The soldier feels the battle in these tragedies; it burns itself into him as with letters of a red-hot iron. A Middlesex is resting for a minute during an action, so that his rifle, which has grown too warm, may cool. He cracks a match to light a cigarette, and a colonial near by asks, "After you?" The poor fellow has raised himself on one knee to grasp the match, when a Hotchkiss shell blasts him, leaving a corpse where he has been. On Vaal Krantz an East Surrey fumbles about for stones—it is night—wherewith to strengthen the shallow entrenchment. His hand lays hold of a Scottish Rifleman, dead and headless. Cold is the touch of that headless rifleman.

Still the marvel, to a despatch-rider, is the number of bullets that it takes to hit a man, much less hit him to the death. He rides half across a battlefield, bullets singing around him, shells bursting everywhere, and yet he is not harmed. While he gallops he has a consuming purpose, and is indifferent to aught else. But when he has to wait, after delivering his despatch, the situation is ill to bear. He dodges as a bullet flies near, but agrees

with the comment of an officer, "It's too late to duck your head when you hear the buzz!" The fact should be known.

A pontoon bridge has to be thrown across a stream in the height of a fight, and the sappers have hard work at this, and a dim prospect of glory from it. A Royal Engineer makes both points clear. His captain has steered the company along a donga to the river bank, where the trout seem to be rising to the flies! Nay, the bubbles denote Mauser bullets, but, says the captain, "It's got to be done, lads; come on!" As they grasp their tools the captain shouts, "Down!" and a hail of lead blows overhead. There is a lull, whereupon picks are flying again and hammers are raining blows. "Down!" The vigilant machine-gun on yon eminence has again sighted the workers, and is snapping at them. "We got the task done in about forty minutes," you learn, "and it was about the worst forty minutes I ever had." Ping, ping; buz, buz; pit, pit; his-s-s! but the pontoon is across the stream, and strong enough to carry a bayonet charge.

Atkins has a keen regard for the bayonet, weapon of long usage and many a victory.

He holds, perhaps, that here is one weapon of war which will not miscarry, being in his hands, whatever may befall other arrangements. The flash of the bayonet is to him a cause in itself, a signal making the blood run hot. Not enmity to any, not wishing any creature hurt, but a deep pining for surety in achievement—that is the feeling of Atkins towards the bayonet.

He is taken with its security; his manhood, valour to the death, is there reflected, but he realises that the bayonet is going. Therefore, while he may, he burnishes it the more, and when it has been laid aside altogether, he will still keep it bright.

Sentiment? No doubt, but sentiment is not a bad holding; it makes the soldier tread leisurely when he has to retire from odds and embrasures. "My heart throbbed and I felt proud that I was a British soldier." Such is the spirit which conquers, and which is richest when it seems to have gained least.

It is the spirit, the being of many a South African battle, as men gaze at each other across the veldt.

IV.—UNDER FIRE

How the soldier takes his baptism, the queer, subtle sensations attendant upon it, and the subsequent fine growth of indifference.

It is a personal study, as distinct from one of battle, to follow the soldier under fire, asking him at various times, How does it feel? This is a matter between his soul and body, something apart from the military event at stake, while also part of it.

"What are those insects buzzing around?" a drummer of the Gordons asks a sergeant-major. "Lad," says he, "they're not insects—they're bullets." The little Gordon understands that he is under rifle fire at long range, and another experience of this reads—

"After we had gone some little way, we heard, as we thought, a lot of flies about. But the flies were bullets, and for a time we took cover behind ant-heaps."

A soldier of the ammunition column is leading his pony near the Tugela, while the big guns hail each other across it. Man and pony

are a mark for keen eyes, and very often "I would hear two or three chums shout 'Look-out!' and down I had to flop flat on my stomach—skirmishing order." This is being under shell fire.

"It's horrid," we have the further statement, "as mostly you can only hear the whiz of the shells, without being able to see them, unless they are the biggest ones; and you expect every one to hit you."

A shadow on horseback creeps up to an officer of colonial scouts with the ghostly whisper, "Will you kindly go and ascertain if there are any Boers on those kopjes." "From the centre fifteen paces, extend!" and in a long loose line they move out.

"Bang, whiz, zip, phut, crack, ping!" reports one of the scouts, "and everything was a mixture of flying bullets and spouts of dust." They have been suddenly fired on, and the scene is like that.

"What's up, Charlie, old man?" "Hit on the leg somewhere," answers the nearest trooper, and within a few strides he falls upon the neck of his horse. "My hand was in his belt, his head on my chest, there was no blood, and his face was going grey." Here is stage

two of coming suddenly, unwittingly under fire; an experience of which a Cape Mounted Rifleman observes, " You hardly knew whether to halt or retreat."

Such evidence on being under fire, leads us to cross-examine Atkins in detail, and he answers in ways like these:

" It's rather a curious sensation being under fire for the first time, but the chief thing you note is this—you're awfully hot and thirsty."

" The only time I really felt inclined to run away was, oddly enough, when we were nearly a mile from the fighting line."

" I tell you for the first hour at Colenso I was ducking my head for all I was worth. Couldn't help it."

" I suppose you think I was frightened, but I was not; never cooler in my life, nor in a happier mind. It's true I felt a bit queer for the first ten minutes, but I should like to meet the man who wouldn't be a bit timid at the start."

" It makes you feel funny when you first get under fire. You are standing waiting for the word to advance, thinking of nothing in particular. Then your officer shouts ' Forward, J Company,' and you begin to march steadily

towards the enemy. The bullets ping, ping, and you hear the crack of explosives; you take a deep breath and shiver, as when you jump into cold water."

"At first you have a kind of gloomy foreboding, next an inclination to laugh, talk or hum; but you are unable to do one or the other."

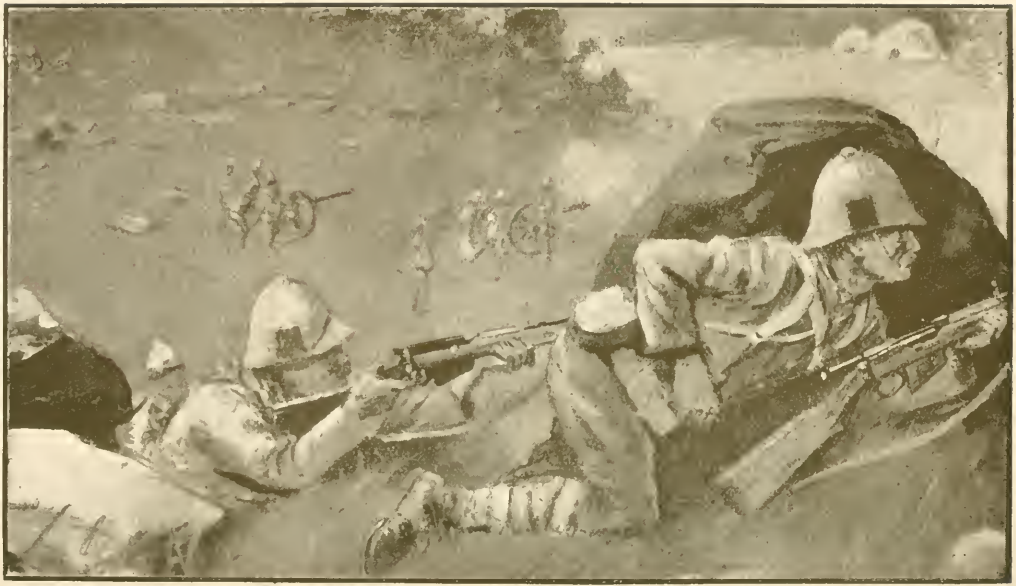
"You feel queer for a few moments"; "I felt funky at the beginning"; "I was dodging the bullets for a while."

Here is the baptism of fire. The statements about it are much alike, and so as to what follows the first sensations. In some cases we have the same witnesses going on with the story:—

"I gradually got used to the patter of the bullets and the shrieking of the shells. One gets a kind of bloodthirsty feeling which it is impossible to quell."

"After the leading round, which had filled us with awe, we were whistling, singing or swearing. I don't believe we were in our proper senses as regards our lives; all we wanted was to go on."

"A peculiar sensation takes possession of you; you feel as if you could rush at them



UNDER FIRE

At first Atkins is rather loath to take cover, "as per drill book," thinking it not quite a fair way of fighting. He soon learns from bitter experience that it is a vital part of the craft of modern warfare, and he orders his work accordingly.

and tear them in pieces. All tiredness disappears like magic when the band begins to play."

"By this time their firing didn't seem to have the slightest effect upon us. In fact we didn't appear to realise what was going on, although the bullets were dropping on all sides, and the bullets were taking off our whiskers."

"I have heard a lot about one being off a bit when in battle, but once begun, you think nothing of it. I felt just the same as a man does when he gets excited at a football match. You seem to feel you are mad, in fact; yet the troops keep as cool as lambs."

"It has often been said, how does a soldier feel in battle? Well, for my part—and a few more—it feels as if you could do with a good smoke, especially of one's favourite cigarettes. That is the honest truth. Of course I mean after you settle down to the thing."

"You see your chums falling round you, and the blood gets into your head, and as you approach the enemy you get down to it, fix the bayonet, clench your teeth and yell like a demented being. Then you are among them —but after that you can't remember."

No, the combatant is "fightin' mad"; the

smell of war is in his nostrils, the swell of it in his veins. His one anxiety is where to find its highest tide, his one thought how to "get his own back." Being once christened to the strife, it captures him, and he is its servant, zealous to serve.

"Though hungry and weary when I went into the fight," says a Northampton, "I can assure you I was as happy as a schoolboy with a new slate." "Made in Germany," a bevy of infantry cry to a shell sneezing over them; and again, "They'll keep on until they hurt somebody." When a shell bursts near by it is "Oh lor! I think I picked myself up a bit at a time."

"It makes," we are told, "a tickling sensation against your heart when you hear a shell go over your head with a shriek. But if one bursts half a dozen yards from you, it makes you think your time has come." Shells try the nerves more than they break the bones, but is the former affliction the less acute? It is nervous torture in contrast to physical torture, and the suffering in either case depends upon the temperament of the victim.

"It's a nasty sensation to hear the shells go by," a Highlander remarks, and we have

the further observation, " One can hear them hissing in the air fully a mile away, though it seems as if they were on the top of you." Back goes an English shell, courtesy for courtesy, and following its flight with a glass a sergeant comments, " Our big shells, going through the air, put me in mind of a huge bird flapping its wings. The Boers call our shrapnel ' hell scrapers.' "

" Put a red-hot shot in a bucket of water," Atkins advises, " and you'll have the noise of a live shell in flight." The small shells of the quick-firer are things by themselves, and measuring their arrival at so many a second, he says, " Why, you might be shaking pepper over your dinner. We don't mind bullets, or big guns, but that beast, the Pom-pom, puts the fear of God into us."

Somebody, in a vivid sentence, declares it to be a gun that screams as if it were a woman in hysterics. After an hour or two of its attentions, a soldier declares, " Dear wife, here I am alive, but how that is, I'm really at a loss to know." He has listened to the bullets asking " Where are you? Where are you? " He seeks to occupy his mind by finding some comparison for their sound, and he suggests a

musical box trying to play two or three tunes at the same time, and finally succeeding. He learns wisdom from the tick-tick, whir-whir of the venomous Maxim on the far shoulder of the kopje. When the whir-whir comes, he knows that the band of cartridges is finished, and that a fresh one has to be put in.

Now he may look up for a second from his shelter, and greet an acquaintance who has made the plunge across some yards of open ground. Says the acquaintance, "I was thinking of that song 'I'm expecting it every minute.'" He can afford to speak lightly, "to shake hands with himself," having evaded the terror. But all men are not so lucky. "You look round and find that two or three of your comrades are down. You think to yourself, Who'll be next? And you go on fighting." War is in many patterns.

There is rifle fire to the left, which dins upon the ear of a soldier as might the clatter of a team of mules crossing a wooden bridge. He is keen to rise and look about, when off goes the top of his sheltering ant-heap. It is a wandering bullet, but it narrowly misses a billet. No more bobbing-up from behind that ant-heap; curiosity is satisfied for the time being.

It is ever present, but at Ladysmith "Sighing Sarah" and "Whistling Willie" proclaim their own shots from Umbalwana. A sigh or a whistle, and the particular gun from which the shell has come is known. There appears to be almost a human element in the big guns; at least Atkins endows them with an individuality. He talks of them, of what they are saying and doing, as if they were alive, and indeed where has man's ingenuity reached nearer to creation than in these monsters? The marvel and pity of it!

On goes the soldier, on with his parcel of fight, which has now shaped itself into an advance, clothed in skirmishes. A corporal faints from shock—a bullet has lifted his rifle out of his grasp—but soon gathers himself together and rejoins the line. A shell buries itself in the sand, sending a cloud of it into the air, and refusing to explode. "Had it burst," a guardsman records, "I should have been eating the earth now." A merry gravedigger!

"It'll be my turn in a moment," a hero of Spion Kop feels sure, since so many comrades lie stark beside him. However he lives to exclaim, with a rifleman, "I thought it was

all up, but I believe what my fortune told me, that I should never die with my boots on." He has not had them off for weeks. Atkins has his little superstitions and hugs them to his bosom, comforters when his world is bleak. "I fancy," says a non-commissioned officer, "I'm not destined for a bullet; anyhow I think I'll have the pleasure of seeing you again. Then I'm going into the Church, for I'm tired of soldiering." "Bullet after bullet," another tale goes, "was dropping between my legs, but not one of them wounded me. I thought every moment that my time had come, but I'm a lucky chap."

There rises from Atkins individually, as from him collectively, the complaint "I can't see an enemy to fire at. What sort of war is this?" "A fellow doesn't mind getting plugged," a Coldstreamer puts his case, "if he can see where the pills are coming from. But it is a bit O.T. when all that can be seen are puffs of smoke behind big rocks on the top of steep hills." Aim at the smoke, and when there is none to offer guidance, it is blind fighting.

"We were like a lot of fools firing at random," a Yorkshireman grumbles, "for,

not being able to see the enemy, we have to feel him." It is a help towards this to have a bullet splash upon the rocks and spout away in angry fragments. Not much of a help, but— " Yes, there goes his smoke again! "

" A beggar has been peppering at me hard for the last ten minutes. I saw his smoke a minute ago from a bush about three hundred yards to my left front, and had a shot at it. His hands flew up at the spot above the bush, so I hope I've got him. He hasn't fired since."

That is a sub-combat, man to man, brain to brain, trigger against trigger, the modern form of the hand-to-hand conflict which ruled for centuries. The resources of the mind conduct such a fight, whereas in days of old the physical qualities struck directly at each other. a nobler quality of combat, is it not, than that of a machine death by hurtle of shell?

Two Carabineers are riding together when a shell carries off the head of one; the other says, " It made me think a bit." A volley causes a company of mounted infantry to think also, for it cuts the grass before them, yet, strangely enough, not a man is hit. The sight of the narrow escapes, more, even, than the presence of death, makes Atkins reflective.

Death leaves no room for debate, it is the closing word; but the dullest imagination is set working by the hair-breadth escape.

One Smith, of the great family, kneels beside a wounded comrade, amid a wind of bullets, and conjures all others within hearing to lie down flat. He himself never "bobs;" the others cannot help it then, though they would charge a commando; so up to the heights with Smith—Smith who never bobs!" He delights the field, and his nerves are as sound as his physique.

It is not hard to delight Atkins; he is naturally happy. He salaams to himself with "We're boys of the bull-dog breed," while his boots are full of water. The little things of life often call for most philosophy; it is they that keep sleep away—worrying, worrying about nothing. But Atkins, when he is utterly tired, goes to sleep with the roar of battle for lullaby. One is impressed with this, so odd does it appear on first thought. But surprise vanishes at reading such accounts and explanations of it as these:—

"You might not credit it, but at Modder River I saw men fall asleep in the firing line, fairly worn out."

" When I was lying under the enemy's fire I was so fatigued that I fell asleep, but I got a queer wakening, for a shell burst just a few yards behind me."

" I actually slept as I lay on the ground, and was duly awakened by bullets striking with a ping at the side of my head."

" As I lay, stretched out under my horse, so sheltered from bullets and the sun, I fell fast asleep, and a lot of our fellows were playing cards all the time. This may appear strange to you, but everybody here was quite unconcerned after the first excitement had passed away."

" I dropped off to sleep. I don't know how long I slept, but I was rudely awakened by the scream of a shell from a Boer ' Buck-up gun,' which exploded about thirty yards from me, and took the right leg off one of our chaps. I didn't go to sleep again."

" Some of the fellows who were thought to be dead were only asleep, having been so overcome that they had lain down under fire, indifferent to it and everything else."

" I got tired of firing and fell sound asleep, and dreamt I was down at Yarmouth, rowing on the sea with two young ladies. But I

was woefully disappointed when I awoke, and I picked up my rifle and continued firing."

And finally a sailor who is serving in the heat of the Natal campaign assures us, "I can't go to sleep unless there's a heavy rifle-fire on; I've got that used to it." Sleep is the reserve of life; the body being exhausted, it is the happy restorer. Why then, on thinking it over, be surprised that the soldier should fall asleep even as his finger is at the trigger? If not sleep, what? Perhaps this plight:

"I was done up, couldn't go any further, so I sat down and said all the swear words I knew. I was too tired to do anything but sit and cuss, and I was cussing for all I was worth—which wasn't much then—when a shell sailed over me and burst ten feet away. It's funny, but I didn't feel a bit tired after that. I forgot everything except the way back, only I fancy I kept on cussing. Still, I couldn't swear."

His distinction between "cussing" and swearing is exquisite, but he had better have slept; for as a rifle goes hot and must cool, as a gun "jams" through over-much exertion, so the human body reaches its limits and Nature steps in with her sweet collapse. Let

Atkins sleep; he has done his day's work, and he will arise a giant refreshed. It is the slumber of the tired child, whom, in even simplicity of character, he often resembles.

Asleep or awake, a Coldstreamer has no fear of the rifle-bullet, but shells disturb him. The reason would hardly be guessed—"Because they cut you up so dreadfully." He wants to be left whole, while he is left at all, having been witness to the blowing up, by a large shell, of a negro engaged in cutting grass. To this dark harvester came the black harvester and carried him hence in a molten embrace.

A Grenadier who has been in the path of equally strange events, decides "to take no more notice." However, he cannot adopt that cheerful view in regard to a drought from which he suffers in the throat—battle parches him. Often a dry tickling of the throat is mentioned as the first sensation that visits a soldier who is under fire. His nerves catch him that way, making themselves felt where they are most delicate. To a Borderer who has gone scatheless, the matter of concern is greater. He asks himself is he to emerge from the fight unhurt, or mayhap not emerge at all. He hopes, but faces the alternative

and thus consoles his father and mother: "At least you'll know that I have died a proper soldier's death."

Neither does a Northumbrian feel in the humour to joke, with lead weaving unseen figures over head. But he is willing to smile at "those reckless devils" who do; to laugh at their cat-calls, "Over the top," "Four yards short," as bullets tear up the ground. They make lively companionship. Talana Hill offers us a private whose confession is, "I never thought I should see anybody at home again, but thank goodness I never funked it. I seemed to be in a trance all the time, still I never forgot to do my duty." No; for a wounded friend, whom he has gathered into his arms, is there killed.

A man tells us, of a fight, that "I hardly knew what I was doing." A lance-corporal recollects, of red Magersfontein, "My only thought was waiting to be hit, and wondering where it would be." He has accepted what he judges to be the inevitable, yet quarrels on a detail. It is a failing we have, and the small peculiarities of human nature are so secure that nothing, not war, not love, can interrupt their set routine. A Connaught sighs for

another battle, even if it were to leave no Connaughts, since it would be a stroke back for that which struck down the colonel. Personal devotion, affection! War blows these fires rosy, so tempering its blasts of doom and destruction, its rushing whirlwind of hell.

How the bullets ply amid it all! An engineer counts those licking the veldt between his legs, but never, happily, the one which does not lick the veldt. A brother in trade leans on his tools to pass the opinion, "You would be surprised at the way our infantry face death. Why, they laugh and crack jokes, accepting all as a picnic, going at it with a dash which nothing stops."

A surgeon offers us the battlefield gleam, "Bullets danced around us, and I felt a kind of solemn disregard, as I had been exposed to greater dangers before." To him there is passed the message, "Doc, you're wanted; there's a man hit on your left." "Doc" leaps from the ground, but it is whiz—whiz—whiz; now by his head, now all around. Still it is paradise—he says that—to move about, after the tension of lying still on the war-mown ground. Now standing, now

running, a bit "fightin' mad" and wholly indifferent—thus the surgeon bears himself to the side of his patient.

"Under fire" is made up of all manner of experiences; it is to march through a whole new life within, may be, a few hours. You have a C.I.V. who is being briskly shot at, and whose feelings, as best he can analyse them, are much the same as those of a bird threatened by a snake. Sough—whiz—ping! It is the music of the rattler, with more than the rattler's sting in it. Or you have a Rimington abruptly brought to a halt by half a dozen rifle barrels that gape at him. He has his horse round in a trice and the spurs into its side, and as he rides for deliverance he moralises strangely:

"They say that when you are in extreme danger all your past life flashes upon you. The only thing I could think of as I galloped away, was the colour of my horse's mane. It reminded me of the hair of a girl I once knew in Johannesburg."

And that is being "under fire," with the odds against the winning of yon corner where the sun trembles, now light, now shadow.

V.—THE COMBAT DEEPENS

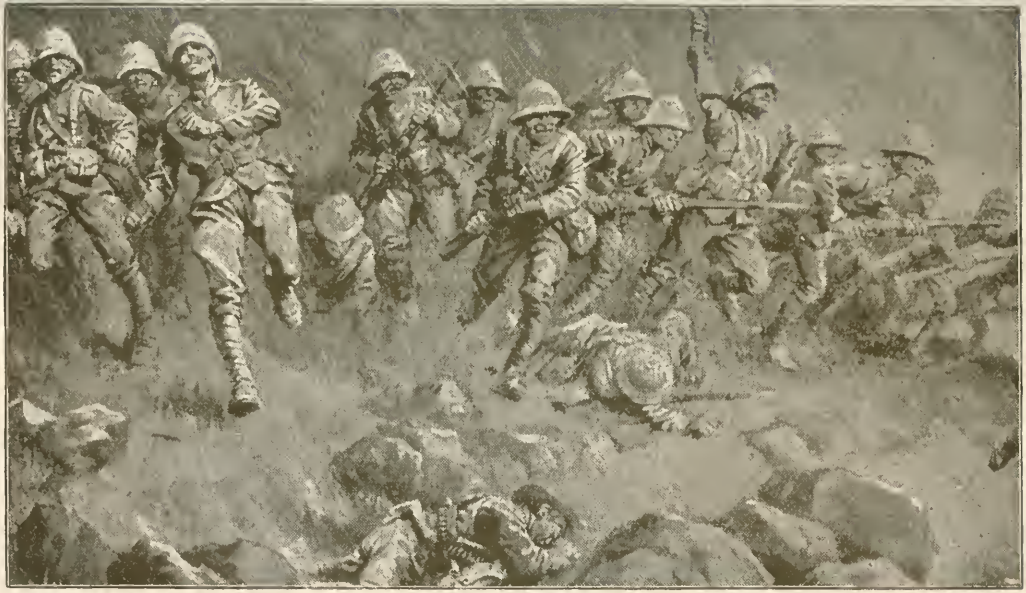
Thrills of the charge, the shock of close grips when men are "fightin' mad," and the cold deadliness of the long-range duel.

THOUGH the shock of old-time warfare, blade against blade, has left us, yet our soldier, and his friend the enemy, often get near enough to smell each other's breath. It is thus at Glencoe, at Elandslaagte, and in some of the fights towards the relief of Kimberley and Ladysmith.

Of the deeps of combat in that sense we catch blasts which stir the latest military science. According to it, the determining hour of battle, the crisis that shapes victory or the reverse, lies elsewhere. That crisis is when rifle-fire stops an advance, or, if it be part of advance, sweeps all before it; when the cannon pound so truly that one side is overborne. Miles tie defeat to victory, not yards as of old. Mostly, the field is cold as the victor reaches it, and altogether the manner of victory and defeat has been revised.

Yes, but the colour, the movement, the *élan* of the charge are still the heroic poetry of war, and so will remain. The charge is war visible, roaring, alive, with quick, certain returns, the gods of war having it out; not a dull, deadly game at a far-flung range. So its glamour remains great, the thing itself puissant, decisive, at many a turning in the campaign. The new military science and the Old Adam are both attendant, then, as we enter with the soldier upon his tensest moments.

"Real fighting, if you have the battle-fever on," a fighter says from experience, produces the most wonderful, indescribable emotion. I won't say that you enjoy killing and wounding, but it is an overwhelming, triumphant feeling to know that the man behind yonder sanger, at whom you have been potting, and who, likewise, has been pursuing the same recreation with regard to you, has at last finished his course, and that, instead of the vanquished, you are the exultant victor. No thought of mourning friends dims the glory of the bayonet-charge, or lessens for a moment the mad intoxication of the last pursuit after a vanquished foe."



THE COMBAT DEEPENS

The most thrilling moments of a battle are gathered into the charge; though it is less common than of old, it remains the poetry of war. This sketch shows the famous charge of the Devons, when they swept a stubborn enemy from Wagon Hill, Ladysmith.

The Combat Deepens

It is the return to the abyss of primitive Nature, the unloosening of the straps and strait-waistcoat of civilisation; it is being, once again, "fightin' mad." "Each man," comes the after-echo of a charge, "was properly mad." "You said, 'Be brave,'" another soldier writes; "why you cannot be anything else. Every man's eye seems to strike fire, and you are mad for the time being and you feel as strong as a lion." These be the close, felling blows of combat, hard and heavy, and to the death; but earlier there is the weary, toilsome advance, training for them.

A stray sheet of paper scribbled in pencil between the spurts forward, emerges from Colenso. "A line may interest you from the battlefield," it reads. "We attacked at dawn and have been slowly advancing since then. We are now four thousand yards from the Boer position, and the shell-fire is terrific. We have about fifty guns; they the same. Shells bursting all around. I've just got a very good photo of one which fell thirty yards off, behind me. This ought to be about the biggest battle of the whole show." Here is the touch of events in the balance, as they seem to one

who is stalking among them. He is in the post of honour, with those who are to ford the Tugela, and as he moves forward he adds to his impressionist sketch:

"Our big naval guns, with lyddite, must be doing a good deal of damage. They plough up the ground for yards round. Pheugh! It's blooming hot! and a wade through the Tugela will be rather enjoyable—if the bullets aren't too thick."

Now "it is too warm to write more as we are under a heavy rifle-fire"; and with that, this fragment, full-scented of the battle, abruptly ends. Roughly abrupt is a picture of the same advance which a common soldier draws for us. He sees and feels at large, not in detail. "Why," he says, "between the moans of the wounded, and the bullets flying, it was all right!" He speaks sincerely, but soliloquises, "It's no good being afraid of bullets. Nor am I; they just shake you up a bit." He gathers himself together, hacks along with his company, and is brought to the ground by two wounds. His hand drips blood, a hole is drilled through his thigh, and he is a load for an ambulance. He stops thinking then. Simply, Babel reigns, and, so far as he

is concerned, somebody else can go into the particulars of it all.

Somebody else does that. The rifle-fire resembles the noise of heavy rain failing, and counting in the racket made by the guns, "It was like a thousand World's Fairs, and a thousand earthquakes, stuck in the Agricultural Hall." A piece of shell is dancing about as if it were a cricket ball gone out of bounds, but drops its capers while it is still innocent of human blood. There are little tufts of dust all over the plain, and as these rise there is always a whistling "phut" to denote, also, just where the bullets are striking. They make a devil's dance on the hard ground.

The bullets of a lively fight write wondrous tales, tragedies, and romances. They twice fling sand in a soldier's face as he crouches low, firing, and then his boot and foot come to harm. "If ever I prayed in my life," he tells us, "it was then"; and you do not doubt him. There is the same note in the jotting of a Grenadier, "With a silent prayer to Heaven, and a thought of all at home, I dashed across the bullet-swept zone." That is his response to the order, "Now, my boys, all together as hard as you can go!" A

Highlander, struck down in such a hazard, sings a hymn while his life is ebbing, and a Highland colour-sergeant welcomes death with the words, "If any man is prepared to die I am." Touching and worthy are these last scenes; they consecrate a bloody field.

A fine legacy for death has this Magersfontein, and to the soldier man death with the sting, "For what purpose?" "Fancy us all," exclaims a Highlander, "when, suddenly, without warning, there broke out a terrific volley of fire. It was awful! Men were falling in heaps! We lay down, as by one common impulse, the bullets whizzing over our heads." Amid what follows, our chronicler is as a piece of driftwood which a swelling river has plucked from its banks.

His rifle is grasped by some unknown hand; perhaps the hand of death itself. Anyhow, he who has clutched it stumbles, others tumble above him, and the rifle disappears under a very cairn of bodies. It is a cairn of remembrance, but not the cairn the ancient Highlanders built when they went forth to fight. Each brought a stone, and when the war was over each survivor returned for one. Thus the cairn of remembrance stood for the roll

of the departed; but here, veritably, lie the warm slain to be counted.

Blood runs wet on a rifle that is gathered from a rock, to replace the lost one. A piper has struck up "The Campbells are Coming," a tune which stoutens hearts and moistens eyes. Shadow and darkness and doubt vanish. It had been "My God, I shall never forget it all my life, Bill! Terrible, fearful; surprised, shot down like dogs!" But, for the moment, it is forgotten in the wild, cheering Highland note of the bagpipes — forgotten, save to avenge. Home with the cartridges, into the firing line, and forward to a day's fusillade under the blistering sun.

It is the high stress of war, a situation which demands the two warrior qualities, moral courage and physical courage. Thirst passes into torture, exhaustion into faintness; and the sun roasts one side of the person, while the sand bakes the other.

"There we lay in the sun all day, and it took the skin off my legs; once I tried to pull my hose up, but this slight movement attracted such a rain of bullets that I gave it up."

The thin line of fire creeps forward, ever nearing the lead-dealing heights, ever getting

thinner. With a hop, step, and a jump, a nimble pastime of the remote Highland Gathering, the soldier advances by knolls of shelter. The sure foot slips, but not because it is at fault; a bullet has intervened, and a wounded man is crawling back to his knoll. Is the shot fatal? Then there may be a cry, a stutter of speech to the winds, a groan, or nothing. War is working vehemently, but it cannot go on thus for ever, since, after all, it is not machinery. Brain and muscle are behind the machinery, giving it life, and they must rest.

The flash of a lantern in the dark holds shadows as well as light; but aye it is the light that triumphs. "Never shall I forget," a Borderer says of shadow and light at Colenso, "our thrills of combined delight and fear, at the thought of rushing into what seemed a veritable death-trap." Beside him is the man who chooses to be the last to turn from a forlorn hope. He is armoured in devil-me-careness and he retires at a slow stride. He halts, kindles his pipe, blows out the match and stamps upon it lest it should set fire to the grass. Yes, indeed! Smoking furiously, he continues his stroll, and raps out

a curse in return for the admiring word. It is his awkward thanks.

Kindred in strain is he who notes of an adventure, "Even if I had been certain to be hit, I think I should have had that drink." He has gasped sorely for a drop of water, and sight of the Tugela fairly makes his tongue ache. He tries to count the bullets pattering in the water but cannot, they are so many. Still, "I chanced it at the finish, went and scooped a helmetful, and I'm hanged if a Boer could hit me." Nor, being a stout fellow, is he a poor target either; which circumstance, on this occasion, blows up his satisfaction.

But he has hardly crowed to himself when he is enveloped by a flash and a crash, and his next memory is the voice of the colour-sergeant asking, "Are you all right now?" He awakens to find himself lying behind a stone, with his coat undone, and he inquires, "How long have I been here?" He fancies hours, but is assured "Only a few minutes," yet long enough, the trouble being no greater than this—"It appears the smoke and dust from that last shell went down the wrong way." He has a vile taste in his mouth.

For that reason, perhaps, none of the higher

emotions of battle worry him. He is content to set the incidents of a day against one another, and accept them weight for weight. More acute is the case of an artillery sergeant, since it is the pitch-and-toss of death or being made prisoner. He imagines that the former fate may fall to him, and "every little thing in my life" runs through his mind; but merely he is made prisoner. That plight kills autobiography, as a Berkshire, at variance with some other witnesses, holds the heat of battle to still the wagging tongue.

"I suppose," his affidavit runs, "it's plenty talk and no do at home about our fight. Here it was just the opposite; it was all do and no talk. In fact, I never heard a man speak for over ten hours—there was no chance. We had enough to do to look after our heads, without talking."

While doing this, a corporal roused in the dim dawn to a scrimmage, encounters a violent end. He loses his helmet, picks up a Boer hat to replace it, is mistaken for one of the enemy and killed. What may not happen when, from the welter of battle, there springs that gleaming fury, the bayonet charge? Watch it, steel-tipped, going up

the heights of Glencoe, where the dying general cries, "Tell me, do tell me, have they taken the hill yet?"

"When the order came to take it," says a soldier, turned historian, "we went up like rockets. I was with some more chaps right in front, and the fashion in which we got over boulders, and took flying leaps across hedges, was a fair treat. I don't know how I did it now, but it didn't seem two minutes from the start when I was right at the top of the hill, stabbing for all I was worth. I was so excited that I got away from our main body, and my ankle twisting over a big stone, down I came a cropper."

What are the thoughts, feelings, impulses, that send the soldier into an instant cheer, when he is bidden to charge the enemy? The question interests a Grenadier with a taste for abstract reasoning. Is it an instinct with all fighting men to shout themselves into the charge—the tally-ho of the hunting field, the cry of an animal in pursuit of another? Is it self-cheering, knitting lines of men together by a thrill, or is it a blast to disconcert the enemy? This is what the Grenadier thinks—

"I suppose you wonder why we cheered?

Well, it's more to frighten the enemy than anything else. They don't like a British cheer; it seems to go straight through them."

Elsewhere there is the statement that it feels " rather funny " to run with the bayonet at a man who has been shooting straight. The sensation is peculiar, as the exercise is dangerous. How is the mind occupied at such a moment? You would never guess one answer. " All I could think of was whether I should get at an enemy, and where I should stick my bayonet into him, and how far? " It is a grim concentration of purpose, but for that take the story of a Scot who has cornered his man and is about to make prize of him. Another Scot intrudes, in a brotherly way, whereupon the first turns on him with, " Tam, gang an' get a Boor for yersel'."

This story might adorn the record of a valiant scribe who bubbles over with, " Oh, wasn't it lovely! Oh my! didn't I make my bayonet red! It was the best fun I ever had; I made one or two of them cough, I bet; they won't cough again in a hurry." A trim fellow this, for the camp fire of an evening, when he who can yarn best is hero. Not always. A

group of yeomen, just out from England, are narrating to another group of regulars the hardships attending the defence and relief of Ladysmith. One of the regulars reports, with great glee, this sequel—

"After they had told us all about the terrible struggle the British had to get to Ladysmith, one of our fellows quietly said that we had taken part in the battles of Colenso, Spion Kop, and Pieters Hill. You could have knocked them down with a feather."

War has other colours besides red. It can be brute and angel in the same minute. It slays, and with scalding tears bends over the corpse. "If you have killed one antagonist," we happen upon the sentence, "you feel as if you would like to keep on killing." Such is the voice of the tempest. With the calm there rises the sweet call of mercy, as, "I pray to God the war may soon be over. The scene was awful to behold. Red, red, red was the colour!" Soul and body strain to bursting in the tussle of war, and there, no doubt, lies its consuming power over the natural man, when he is in its midst. It is the supreme sensation of spirit and flesh, for the former

has hardly vanquished the latter, as we have seen, when the scale again turns—

"Our men fixed bayonets, up came the Gordons, and with one British cheer they went at 'em like h——. Nothing between us and the enemy but distance, and all rushed it as if we were mad."

South Africa does not yield us the rattle of a great cavalry charge, events there not being so ordered. But of horsemen flying after horsemen we have endless visions, mostly with room between them; once or twice, as at Elandslaagte, with less than a lance length. "Nothing can hold our men in," writes a trooper, of one of those close-driven and not very familiar scenes. "You see lance and sword flash, and hear the thud of the slashes right and left, but you don't know you are fighting. You know nothing till you hear the 'rally' sounded, and you pull up to find that you are merely a common soldier," Rough-riding, in a saddle of scarlet, is a nightmare memory, for a comrade stands up in his sleep and raves of its scenes.

Another trooper has a two-mile ride, with a plunging cannon fire for accompaniment, and on his lips Tennyson's line, "All in the

valley of death rode the six hundred!" "Draw swords; come on; men of the Inniskillings, charge!" — that is an order repeated to us. "We were like a lot of mad men," the writer declares; "we went like lightning into them." Consider a charge, driven home by horse, and what an intoxication it must hold. It is the prince of animals blowing as a bellows on the human fires of his rider. There is life, assuredly, in being swung along by a horse; a swift singing of the blood. Set that horse aglow with the spur of war, and who shall number the emotions of the rider? The senses go drunk with battle.

But, meanwhile, the long fight, at long reaches, has been writing the doomsday book —the combat also deepens with the big guns. "Enough to turn your hair grey," a bombardier says of a cannon duel, so let us go into action with a battery which finds itself where death and glory are the counters.

"Halt!" "Action front!" The orders are nicely precise, and are acted upon with precision. It is ping! ping! ping! The shells lisp in numbers which have only two meanings, a miss or a hit. A driver is shot

and a horse falls, tripping up two others; but they are got to their feet again and into a donga. Meanwhile the battery is blazing shrewdly at yonder smoke, and the ground groans and complains. It is steady conflict, ding-dong, load and shoot, and load once more. The opposing guns are beneath the elbow of the hill, as nearly as can be told by the smoke puffs. A shell sails through the air, searching hither and thither, uncertain, apparently by its cries, where it ought to alight. It pitches beside three gunners and leaves two, a gory sum in arithmetic.

The great guns are automatons which, by contrast, show in relief the eager, sweating gunners. There is touching record of two men who find themselves the only survivors of a gun's company at Colenso. Mauser bullets have harvested their comrades, yet they work on until there is no more ammunition left. Having fired the emergency rounds of case, they stand to the " 'tention " and fall. It is their version of " Abandon be ——! We never abandon guns! "

How heroism gilds the horrors of that affair, and how quietly Atkins conveys this heroism to our understanding! " Now my

lads, it is your last chance to save the guns; who will volunteer? " They are stunned with the inferno which they have been through, and need a minute to grasp the appeal. " Then the corporal got up," we have the rest, " and when we saw him we volunteered at once to fetch them." Simple faith, you see, and Norman blood; and the teaching that adversity is the mint of supreme heroism.

" It's a bit warm up there," a pert rifleman interjects, in the same spirit of brisk fortitude; " they have hit me three times, but haven't rung the bell yet." He is the fellow to march with when the troops are heavily engaged; and his spirit is rampant. Some men are lighting their pipes, others joke at a bullet striking unduly near; and a new-comer pushes quickly into the firing line because, he declares, " I won't get shot till I've had a pop at one or two of them."

Swish! swish! The Mausers snap in the grass, and the Lee-Metfords crack back; tumultuous combat is everywhere; it makes heroes, and mayhap lunatics, being a wild shake-up of man and universe.

Onward it rolls, its sounds an orchestra to the world, and none can name all the music.

HIT!

Dirges the bullets play on the strings of life they have broken; a battle-field chorus crying to the night of the long silnce.

It may be possible to look at a battle without seeing it, to lie under its fire and care not, to be unthrilled by its maddest hour. But to be hit? That is a direct, clamorous challenge to the individual, an affair all his, his only, and so he must speak or be for ever silent.

"When a Tommy gets wounded," writes a Middlesex drummer, "he is a regular Die Hard. He simply says 'I've got it,' and in such a calm manner too."

That is the mettle, but it expresses itself in a hundred different ways. It is a question of temperament, of the physical condition at the moment, of religion and the higher things. To be hit, going down before the laggard report has overtaken the bullet it speeds, is to taste of the incalculable, the uncanny.

The deeps of this world and the next surge in the bald record of a fatality at Ladysmith. Two soldiers are fighting side by side, when

suddenly one lurches heavily into the arms of the other. "My poor chum," says he, "gave a groan and cried 'Mother,' and that word has been ringing in my ears ever since. But he died like a British soldier, and I hope he has gone to a better world."

A Highlander, a good lad not long from the fireside, is calling for his mother, as the stretcher-bearers carry him away. A private of the Queen's tells of a young comrade who "rolled over into another chap's arms, said 'Mother,' and died." Often the dear word comes to the lips of the wounded. Poor fellows drop with a sad, loving cry to mother or wife. The theme is almost sacred.

So is that suggested by a Northumberland Fusilier who, wounded in limb, lies in a sheet of fire. "I offered up a prayer to God," he says, "to look after you and the children." But here the trifle comes in most absurdly, and all is changed as at the waving of a wand. A bullet tears the fusilier's trouser and his angry resentment at this puts new life in him. He struggles to his feet, hobbles onward, and happily is not to be counted within the meaning of a guardsman's report, "It is strange that a majority of those in our battalion, who

have been killed or wounded, are married. It seems hard for them."

An artillery driver, shot in the heart, murmurs, "Oh, Johnny!" and is dead before his companion can turn round to him. A shell rips a man open, leaving him scarce time to say, "Help!" the piteous cry of the doomed. One Seaforth is counselling another to rest quietly, and so master the pain of a wound, when a bullet hits himself. "I'm done for now," are his words. Those of an officer, whose life is rushing from five wounds, are "My God! My God! I'm shot! Lie down, men, lie down!" His thought is for them, when the shock of his own numbering for death lets him think.

An officer of Highlanders, equally concerned for his men, who love him, is enjoining them to make the most of their scant shelter. "He was just telling me to keep my head out of sight, and when he got the length of 'head' he was shot. I was almost crying when I saw him fall back. I gave him my water-bottle, but he was about gone." He passed with the goodbye, "I am done for, boys."

A youngster, on the track of glory, is struck by a bullet, but only on the cartridge pouch.

That being all, and being a youngster, he yells grandly, but his face is a blush of self-conscious shame a minute later. Another lad bothers the corporal for his rifle with which to have a shot at the enemy—bothers and cajoles him to loan it for a minute. Afterwards the boy is wounded in the right lung, yet he keeps cheerful and smiling, a way "serious cases" have.

The crown of gay endurance surely belongs to the heroic naval lieutenant who has had his legs amputated by a stray shell. "My cricket is spoiled," he remarks to himself, lighting a cigarette, at which he blows like a very Boreas, all the road to the hospital. For him the end is written, and he faces it with Spartan courage, and the composure of a fine mind.

The near approach of death startles a soldier at Stormberg, for a ghostly shadow may be harder to meet than a reality. "I was singing and joking with my chum when a bullet struck the top of my helmet. I stopped all of a sudden, and even now they all chaff me about it." Stops all of a sudden! That is exactly what he would do. A Coldstreamer, whose ear a bullet splits, has the confession, "I assure you I thought my time had come!"

And how is it when it does come? Again the answer is as various as human nature.

A valiant fighter, employed in the trenches on Spion Kop, has his arm blown off close to the shoulder. He picks it up with the other hand, saying "My arm, my arm! Oh God, where's my arm?" Raging with pain, he bounds out of the trenches, is instantly killed, and thus saved more torture of mind and flesh.

A soldier, hurled from an armoured train by a shell, which also destroys his arm, runs, shrieking, down the line, and can hardly be gotten back. The "horrible and awfu'" must reach its worst in the incident of a wounded Highland sergeant, who madly plucks off his kilt, and rushes towards the enemy. Death stops him half way. This will be on that fated day of valorous death about which another Highlander has the report, "I believe several of our fellows went off their heads and walked right up to the enemy's lines, singing till they were dropped."

Soldiers are hit and do not know it at once, so engrossing may the fight be, so accomplished its messengers. Of two privates, resting in the ascent of Spion Kop, one is munching an army biscuit, and the other is flicking small

pebbles at him. A particularly sharp stone, as the man with the biscuit fancies, strikes him on the neck. He leaps round and demands indignantly, "Say, Bill, did you chuck that stone at me?" Bill denies the charge, and perceiving the occasion for it rejoins, "Why, mate, you're wounded." The bullet has caught him on the right side of the neck, and gone into the shoulder.

"When we lay down," another instance is on record, "I found to my surprise that I was wounded." An East Surrey has no notion he is hit until he proceeds to fire his rifle, and then he discovers that he cannot move his arm. A West Surrey is in the act of firing, when something strikes him on the head. He fancies, at the moment, that it is a kick from a mule, but later finds the sear made by a hot bullet.

By contrast, there is the affair of a stretcher being ordered along to a man who thinks he is hit, and is not. When he satisfies himself that his skin is still whole, he rebuffs the stretcher with enormous energy. But somebody else needs it. A bearer bends down to give a drink of water to a Connaught who is wounded in the thigh. His kindly deed is

anticipated by a rifle-bullet which goes through the Connaught's brain. "I thought," the bearer exclaims, "I should see no more of my friends. Another exclamation for a similar shock is, "My hair rose on end, and I expected a finisher every moment." Men express the same feeling quite differently.

How to define the stroke of a bullet? What does it feel like? A Welsh bugler speaks of a sting coming into his elbow, and another soldier compares it to a sting in the leg. "I believe I've stopped it," he says of a bullet, and he is right, for his leg drips blood. "I was about to charge with my rifle," is the evidence of a Black Watch private, "when I felt a stinging pain in my leg, and after hobbling for a few yards I fell, exhausted from loss of blood." A colour-sergeant of the same regiment, while shooting from an ant-heap, is struck on the back of the neck. He compares the shock to that which a bar of iron might give, and he goes numb for a few seconds.

The blow, as of a heavy assault, is also in the testimony from Wagon Hill, "I felt as if a man had come from behind and struck me with a sixteen-pounder, and afterwards

put a red-hot needle into my shoulder." At Graspan a sailor is seized with a pain in the shoulder, as if a stout stick had struck it. He grows sick and faint, but is consumed with curiosity until he has traced the course of the bullet. At Belmont a marine has "a funny sensation" steal into his arm, as if somebody had given him "a blow on the funny bone." His arm fails him, and when he examines it there is a hole through the fleshy part.

"It knocked me for six," is the statement we have about a bullet in the knee; "it might have been those hammer things for which you pay a penny, and try your strength." A wound from a piece of shell comes about thus: "All of a sudden I felt a bang on my knee. I tried to advance, but tottered and fell." This wound is ugly, but that is the hall-mark of shell in all its activities. It is the thunderbolt of war, the wrecker of nerve, when not the body-breaker.

Its measure of efficiency in the latter sense is shown in a tale from Spion Kop, related by a Scottish Rifleman. A shell slides over his back, cuts up his neighbour, and breaks the arm and thigh of a second man. It blows off the legs of a fourth soldier, and a

fifth is left with one leg hanging by the skin. "They never murmured," we learn; which is the lamp of a tragedy too grim for words. The blood of two races mixes in the African mother-earth, she taking back to her embrace the manhood of which war leaves men the poorer.

"Thank God I don't feel as bad as I look," is the cheery hail of an officer with one side of his face almost gone. "I can't drive, I can't ride, I can't fight any more," cries a sentenced gunner, "but I can die like a soldier for my Queen and country." He stops there, a gleam flames in his eyes, as of a winter sun dipping behind the hills; he shouts "Battery halt, action!" and all is finished.

The death of an artillery driver is strangely similar, though, indeed, he has just complained that it lags behind its welcome: "I can't drive now, I can't fight, I can do nothing; I cannot even die." This he repeats, over and over again, to each knot of sympathising comrades, but even as he speaks the black-striped corporal of the guard arrives to relieve him. "Form up number four company!" The raving soldier sings it out in a voice which echoes the grave. His face turns grey and

rigid, the command is "March," and his round of duty is over.

A young chief of Highlanders, who has been in many a hot corner, is shot through the heart, his most vulnerable part, because it was open to mankind. "Oh, they have done for me this time," is his dying word. Instant death! It is a gurgle, a murmur, a mere recognition of what has happened, or a startled cry of surprise. A corporal crawling from one bush to another meets a death-laden bullet, and groans faintly, "My God! God! God!" How painfully, how lovingly such details are chronicled; the fragments of a soldier's shroud, for mother or wife or child to treasure.

Two soldiers are in a ditch, under cover, putting to each other the inquiry, "When is that ammunition coming up, so we can get another smack at them?" One turns his head with a bullet in it, and dies in the middle of the talk. This upsets the other more than rows of stranger dead would, being the difference between what is personal and what is general. He has seen his "chum" slain, and that is to taste of the very bitterness of death. Elsewhere "chums"—the relationship is part and parcel of Atkins—are

firing from the same clump of shelter. "Look at this," says one holding up his bruised helmet; "I hope it does not get any nearer than that." Before he can return his helmet to his head he is a corpse to a surer bullet.

With death searching the air, the mind seeks comfort and courage in fond memories and thoughts of happy hours in the future. Several artillery drivers make a ring of talk, and one laughs, "What a spree I'll have when I get back!" But instead he is the immediate victim of a shell, and we see the same radiant hope crushed in an incident vouched for by a Coldstream. "My chum and I," he records, "were talking of what a grand time we would have when we got back to London. Not many minutes afterwards we had the order to advance and he fell, shot in sixteen places." The London of the Guards was to know him no more.

At Paardeberg a man lies in such agony that his saying on death is, "I prayed it might be quick. Comrades were killed and wounded by my side, and I could not get away, but the Lord kept me alive through it all." A marine, who "gets it hot" at Graspan is also in the plight to name death as a welcome

visitor. A rough tourniquet dams enough blood back into his veins to keep him alive, and he watches the bullets "making spots" all round him. "I just lay still," he writes, "wondering when they were going to put one into me, and almost cursing them because they didn't, for the sun was fearfully hot, and I was gasping thirsty."

It is the body in despair, in collapse; not merely in pain, as when a "red-hot" bullet lodges under the puttie of a soldier and burns the flesh. The doctor certifies it too warm to hold in the hand, and trudges to the next patient, perhaps a philosopher in this style:

"Hit, by jove! As we were advancing I got a bullet through the leg, not bad—through the fleshy part of calf. I was just getting under cover, and suddenly went head over heels; am now lying in a ditch waiting for stretcher-bearer."

Next, to a stoic. "Near shave that, sir?" "Yes," he gets answer, and then, after a long pause, the information, "That shot hit me in the foot; but never mind, I can stick it, so don't say anything." He fights on. The near shaves are constant, and Atkins sets down the fact indifferently. His interpretation of a

" near shave " is a miss by a hair's breadth, or a hurt which, by some providence, is not fatal. If it is the former he assures us that " you begin to feel queer "; if it is the latter, that " you feel pretty queer." The distinction is excellent as between broken bones and whole.

After a battle a soldier rummages his waistcoat pocket for the short-stalked well-coloured peace-pipe. His fingers close on a bullet that has broken the pipe. He is surprised out of his smoke. A man with a splintered leg that refuses further duty, makes it comfortable as he lies on the battlefield, then lights a cigarette. One bullet hits his haversack, a second grazes his heel and many bury themselves in the sand beside his head. At Spion Kop a Scotsman finds himself blazing on, with a stone-cold Lancashire Fusilier at each elbow:

" The bullets struck anywhere but me, until I fancied I was having it all my own way. Then came a crash right over the top of the trench into my hip, and splinters of rock with it. I fancied my leg had gone, for the blood poured like a tap, but the pain soon stopped, and I had another pop at them."

There is never enough of the " other pop," and one story in that relation is quite odd.

It presents us with a soldier who has been wounded in the elbow before he can fire a shot in the war. This worries him much; it is not in his thoughts to carry home a clean rifle. So he asks his comrades to prop him up, to level it at the enemy, and to make his wounded arm pull the trigger. Then, and only then, does he allow himself to be carted off to the hospital, with its surgical problems, complex as those of the Gordon Highlander who has a broken wrist, a hole in the forehead, and a bullet in the "napper."

"I was out of action after that," he confesses, "for all was dark. I heard the officer say, 'Poor chap, he's gone.' But no, I am still kicking."

Hardly less trying is the experience of a trooper who gets down to fasten his horse's bit. A bullet flies over its neck and enters the rider's chest by the top buttonhole of his tunic. "Had it been the least trifle either way," he assures us, "it would have killed me, but thanks be to God for His mercies, I am getting on famously." A staunch heart goes all the day!

It enables an Irish soldier nobly to endure suffering while he helps to carry his wounded

colonel from the field. "Who's hit?" the colonel demands of the men who are bearing the stretcher, for there has just been a telltale "slushy thud." "Begorra, sir, an' it's me," is the answer; "it's in the neck." "Put me down," orders the colonel. "No, sir," is the man's frank discipline; "I am able to carry you to safety." He does that, and then rolls into the hands of the doctors.

A brother Irishman occupies the wait until his part in a battle shall arrive, by carolling "Standing round a corner, watching people fight!" He is more than musical; he is confident that the affairs of his particular task "will never upset me." But even so a bullet overthrows him, and his gaiety is eclipsed for the time being.

The airy note is frequent in these avenues of strife and death. "I caused a little fun," notes a Royal Lancaster, "by lighting my pipe as soon as I was shot. He has a precedent in the Gordon officer who, being crippled in a charge, limps to a rock where he can smoke and cheer his men. A picturesque incident! Heroism need not be drab to the eye, though mostly it is.

A young trooper and a fragment of shell

have a meeting, and it is ill for him. But he carefully collects his belongings and tracks down the kopje to where the stretchers wait. "Hullo, old man," he salutes an acquaintance among the bearers, "they've shot away one lung, but I've got a second left, and I'm not going in this time!" Nor does he, thanks to a constitution as good as his resolution, the double endowment with which to meet scowling fortune.

A soldier explodes sharply at another, "Now what do you mean by sitting down on the top of me?" It is sad laughter, for the reason turns out to be a straight-driven bullet. However, we brighten up over the experiences of the Irishman who proclaims in a fine brogue, "Ah, and if the brutes haven't hit me! That's one back ter them." Here a second bullet catches him, and he delivers himself, "Be jabers, if they haven't struck me the second toime." Yet once more is he hit. "Well," he exclaims, his wonder grown big, "that's number three. The blackguards might leave a party alone after they've hit him wance." He fires his pouch empty to mark his sense of this unfairness, and by that time his wounds have the mastery.

Hit!

A "slushy thud" is heard, the still, small noise amid the storm, and a soldier stumbles in his forward step. "I've got it!" he cries to his nearest neighbour, who turns to help him. Or he may fall without a word—merely with the gurgle of one suddenly slain.

"I've got it, Pasha," says one rifleman, in a low voice, to another. "Get one home for me, and aim straight." That is Atkins still on the trail of "getting his own back"; the Scriptural eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It is a trail on which a Wilts soldier erects the sign-post, "The more of your chums you see knocked down, the madder you seem to fight."

"It makes a man hard-hearted," a Berkshire joins in; "all you think of then is revenge." "Goodbye," a dying soldier mutters; "let 'em have some bullets and don't forget that 'They can't beat the boys of the bull-dog breed!'" Endless are the lights when the veldt is lit.

Rake its fires again, and you drag forth the pure gold of an officer's sacrifice: "No, you stop here, and I'll carry that. You are a married man." With this he relieves a corporal of a despatch, the delivery of which lies through a deadly cannonade. His words are his own death-sentence, as they might well be the epitaph on his grave. Equal in chivalry is the act of a colonial whose near-side trooper tumbles from the saddle with the wail, "Oh, God! won't somebody help me?"

The colonial wheels about his own horse, in the storm of lead, with the answer, " Yes, old chap, I'll help you."

Long, long is the tale of being hit in battle; it is a Jacob's ladder linking earth and heaven. " Never mind me, lads," is the word of a doomed Lancaster captain to his men: " trust in God as I have done."

" 'Ere, matie, 'ave a look at my identification card; tell the wife I did my best to get home to her, but——"

That tale is complete.

VII.—CORNERS OF WAR

The individual amid the thunder of his surroundings, which, while they occupy his full energies, do not obscure his soul.

To the human plant war is as a hot-house, wherein things ripen, or, if they cannot bear the heat, are crumpled up. This thought carries us into its little personal corners, which show the individual, like a silhouette, upon the screen of the event.

Such prominence for the man is due when his spiritual side is concerned, that element being the superior of affairs however great. "Death is hovering around us," says a soldier; "I never was religious, but this business is changing me, and many thousands more." If a fuller exposition of his meaning be sought, it is to hand from a Northampton:—

"War is the most sobering influence I know. Not only does it keep men sober in the sense of drink, but it sobers their every day, by reflections and thoughts of their possible fate. They listen more attentively

to the religious services, and you will find scores who, in times of peace, may be the worst blasphemers, now studying their Bibles and turning towards God. There is plenty of scoffing in barracks, but a man who says his prayers has a respectful and even reverent audience in his tent. Sometimes I wish, for the sake of the morals of our army, that we were always at war. If it brings evils, it also brings the blessing of impressing soldiers with their duties to their God, as well as to their Queen and country."

This note of religion is frequent, and one fruit of it is faith, even faith drifting towards a certain fatalism as to the perils of battle. "We have only once to die," runs a letter, "and if I fall it will be as a British soldier, so you have nothing to fear." The spirit of reliance on Providence is now and then jostled by a worldly detail in a way which almost provokes a smile. You have that in the sentence from a Highlander's letter, "God in His mercy has kept me through it all, but I wonder how I am not grey-haired!" However, reverence is not contained in a phrase, and to plain faith the here and the hereafter must, in war, seem very near.

A Coldstreamer says of a religious book which a friend has sent him, "It has become quite a star in the land for us." Almost the first voice he hears in the morning is, "What's the text for the day?" An Irish Roman Catholic asks his relatives to get some masses said for him, and an English Protestant tells us of an hour in battle when "I prayed to God to look after you and the children."

The feeling that surges in these depths worships even in a music-hall song: "Goodbye, Daddy," is sung and eyes are wet with tears. "They didn't let it go," we are told of the chorus, "as they would if they had been in a London music-hall. They sang it in a quiet, soulful way, which showed that many of them felt deeply what they were singing." Surely, for the concert is at Ladysmith, where men in their isolation have time to think.

And in the open country, on the limitless South African veldt, where nothing disturbs man's communion with Nature, hearts also beat to the enduring things. "I often think of dear old mother's words when I cut the top off a loaf, or when I had thrown bread on one side because it was stale." The writer quotes

her advice as, "Ah! my boy, you might come to want it one day." So it has fallen out, and he mentions the prophecy and the fulfilment because he loves to talk of his mother. His fellows each chime back, "Why, my dear old mother has often said that to me!" This also is the love of men for their mothers—a fire by which they bivouac, a star by which they steer.

A non-commissioned officer wisely remarks of Atkins that he grumbles at small annoyances and laughs at great ones. He is ruffled when a raindrop trickles through his tent and steals coldly down the back of his neck. But let him be blown out of that tent by a hurricane, then drenched to the skin, and he is the buoyant warrior, indifferent to the elements. He frets at the single drop of rain, just because it is a trifle, which can have no purpose, and he rises on the wings of the storm, saying, "Here's an event of consequence." Perhaps human life runs more on these extremes than on the middle way of calculation, expressed in the following extract:—

"After this campaign I hope to settle down into a quiet, peaceful life, get my medals made

into brooches for some of my family, and pack up my military things for my descendants to unpack when they feel disposed to work up some martial feeling."

Do not imagine that our philosopher is really lacking in the martial quality! It is infectious when not inborn. A man at Stormberg is so possessed of it that, before jumping into a sheltering ravine, he turns about, waves his helmet defiantly, and shouts he knows not what. He does it all at the risk of his life, for the bullets are zip, zip, zipping—his version of their noise—with dour regularity. The individual in him is momentarily detached from the ongoings of the fight. His eye catches sight of a khaki-clad figure lying at the bottom of the ravine, exactly on the spot where he himself will alight. "I thought it would be cruel to jump on him, so moved higher up." And the bullets are zip, zip, zipping in pursuit of the mere physical unit of war as it stands on the edge of the ravine. They know not the being of soul and thoughtfulness who jumps clear of a wounded comrade.

Wonderful is the warp and woof of a battle! A Grenadier loses his water-bottle stopper

in a fray, and is inconsolable till he finds a stray cork with which to guard the hole. One of the Black Watch is holding a flask containing a few drops of water to a comrade's caked lips when a bullet blows the flask into fragments. A kindly lancer stays with another who is down so that the latter may have company in a racking, withering cross-fire. His agony, he tells us, is not the pain of a wound, but the fear of being hit again. We see the short shrift which pain gets from the bearer of it, in the action of a Welsh drill-sergeant, who cuts off his boot, and with a knife digs a Mauser bullet out of his foot. "Proper Welshman!"

The quiet, incidental heroisms of the battle-field, acts which come and go, unnoticed and unrecorded, make a golden book. Two Highlanders, brothers, are lifting a third Highlander who is hurt, in order to carry him to shelter. They start on the errand but stop quickly, for a shot has found a target, and a brother is brotherless. Two friends who cling to each other like brothers, though they are not, meet in surprise and joy. "I thought you were dead," says one. "No, not yet," says the other as they shake hands. "Goodbye,"

says the first, and they part "like ships that pass in the night."

Then brothers come together in a dramatic way. One has been in Ladysmith, while another has been doggedly fighting to relieve it. "Some one suddenly called out my name, and I ran and found my elder brother Thomas riding by with his battery." Do they embrace? Do they weep tears of affection? No! "It's about time," says the newcomer, "you had something to eat."

A boy bugler does vital service to the wounded scattered over a hillside, helping them to creep under cover, cheering them up. But he comes to a man who is dead, and the shock drives him back into boyhood. He cries, and is packed into a jackal's burrow out of the battle. Nature does not allow boys to be men for more than a few hours; only as a preparation. Her cross-currents, however, are manifold.

They are suggested by the soldier who writes, "Every fellow that gets shot is saying, 'Thank God I'm finished with the war!' and I don't blame them, for it's horrible." It is the war-worn wail of the flesh, but up leap duty, citizenship, the impulse to achieve,

the determination to win. Note how, in the instance of a guardsman, these elements meet and settle their differences. He is ill, but eager to be in the fighting line. He is urged, almost ordered, to fall out and go on the sick list; he turns a deaf ear even to the cajoling, "You have a wife and children, and a medal and a clasp to come, so give up." He does not like the idea. He must see the engagement through, and only after that does he allow himself to be sick. His combat with the keen enemy, disease, wins no medal, but it is that of a prince of victory.

A Dublin Fusilier who plunges unexpectedly into a corner of rifle-fire has thereupon two impulses. The first is to turn and run, the other to reach the enemy's trenches before anybody else. This is at Colenso, where we find a touch of superstition in the question that morning of a private to his tent-mates, "Couldn't they pick any other day than a Friday to fight? I'll bet a penny to a pound we don't get near Colenso to-day." The speaker who thus fears to speak of a Friday is killed in the battle.

A man stands up in his sleep and mutters, with pointed hand, "There will be a fight

there to-morrow, and some of us will catch it." The fight occurs, and he is among the slain. Of sixteen soldiers who talk one evening of the yarns they will spin at home, eight are being laid into the earth next evening. It has been a severe struggle, like Elandslaagte, where a wounded piper of the Gordons sits on a rock, nursing, not himself, but his beloved pipes. They are a new set, only arrived from Scotland, and now the windbag is bullet-riven. It will blow no more music, and that is the ache which fills our piper. Otherwise he is a match for the ups and downs of war, and its unfathomable mysteries, its curious incidents.

"By George!" exclaims a rifleman, "we did have a hot time of it. How I got out I don't know; my luck must have been in that day." Atkins believes in his luck; it is one of the pegs of his philosophy. A Lancaster, after twice avoiding death by a hair's breadth, salutes himself as the "luckiest man on earth.' A comrade boasts of equal luck, and a few minutes later treads upon a poisonous snake. "Hard, wasn't it?" he asks, "to be nearly destroyed by that brute after surviving the battle?"

A Northumbrian, whose watch has stopped a bullet, congratulates himself, though only in a degree, for, you see, he has suffered damage to property, and a time-keeping watch is a boon to a tent's company, the owner of it a man of importance. A half-crown piece will turn a spent bullet, and does it in some cases without being spoiled as legal tender. But from an outpost engagement we have the lament, "The Queen's shilling in my pocket was driven through my thigh by the bullet." And Atkins sails gaily into verse about the affair, so bringing to our attention his lyrical gifts, which form another small corner in war:

> "We thought our Bobs at least was good,
> But every hope it robs,
> To think that Bobs's Tommies should
> Be treated thus by 'bobs.'"

"Some poor devils," a west-country soldier remarks quite unpoetically, "can't get within a foot of a bullet but they kop it, whilst many have missed me by inches." He adds that four men have been shot dead in positions that he has occupied a few minutes earlier. "Such is luck, and I can do with plenty of it;" and there he leaves the matter. It is

carried forward by a writer whose view is, "Somehow I don't think anything will happen to me; I'm sure I was not made to be shot, not after my escape in that first battle." Perhaps it has been as narrow as that of the man who is tied up in a wire fence, in the middle of the fire-zone, until a bullet snaps the wire and sets him free.

That is an episode, while a sergeant of the Scottish Borderers gives us an odd coincidence. A home friend sends him good luck in the jocular remark, "If you fail to find a bullet, don't stop one for me." On the date which this letter bears, the sergeant is wounded. He marvels somewhat, but a Connaught Ranger is altogether serious about presentiment, holding it to be actual second sight. At Pieters Hill, nearing the end of the rough road to Ladysmith, his closest friend is shot in the heart. "Give my love to my wife and chil—— Ah—h!" and death chokes the tender message. "Often," the more fortunate Connaught continues, "I have heard fellows say, 'I know I'm going to kop out,' and sure enough they have." He has never had these forebodings himself, and he survives to wonder "Does something warn us?"

However that be, can a spirit of dread, a dark vision of the future, be more awesome than the spirit of the immediate dead encountered without warning? It is an Irishman, all thirst after Colenso, crawling to the Tugela to assuage it, who suggests this. Let him tell how:

"I was lowering my bottle into the river, when I started back aghast. What did I see? From the bottom there stared up at me the dead face of my comrade. We were boys together, and joined the regiment together; early in the battle we were fighting side by side, and now, after the awful work, I met him once more." Truly, a cold corner in death.

But there is laughter and relief in the plight of two soldiers who, being engaged in making a trench, differ as to their respective shares in the labour. The argument drives them to the incaution of showing themselves on the skyline. Presently, with many a "flirt and flutter," along skims a Boer shell. It settles the dispute and perhaps points a moral. How often, in history, has the personal fire invited the flame of war? Not once nor twice only.

But Atkins does not let abstract questions come between him and the by-play of the

fighting. There is the tale, classic in worth, of the Zulu mule-driver who accidentally drops his concertina in the path of an oncoming crowd of cavalry. His concertina is his heart's delight, and he turns about in his perched seat and yells again for its preservation. "Mind that concertina! pass the word!" thereupon cries the good-natured leader of the horsemen, twisting past it himself. Signalling hands go up, and the word is carried down that street in the veldt, "Mind the concertina; mind the wind-jammer!" The cavalcade picks cautiously past it, in the rush for the next innings of war, and the Zulu smiles his gratitude.

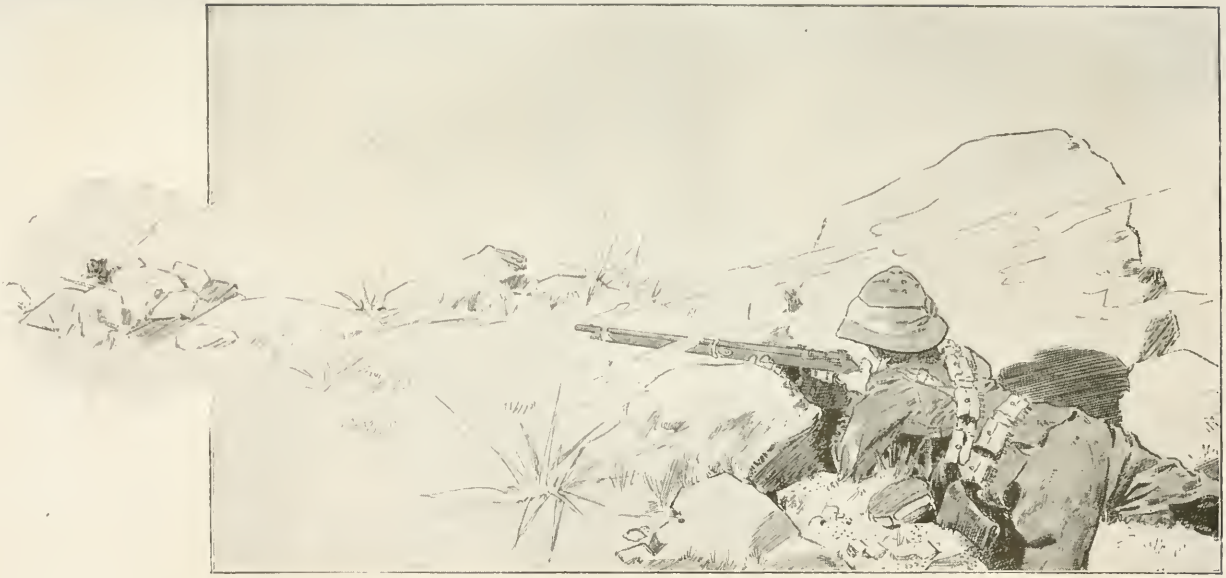
An infantry corps is under fire. A member of it has a tin of biscuits which keeps falling to the ground. But always he stoops to recover it, as if it were a greater stake than his own life. A Highland corps is advancing:

"When we opened out, a hare ran along our front and buried itself in an ant-heap. An officer in our company shouted, 'Half for me, Macdonald,' and I dashed out in front and caught it. After carrying the hare for ten hours I had to throw it away."

This is the small change of warfare. Among

its larger currency we find the hoary saying, "Better be born lucky than rich!" So says a private who has gone through many fights unhurt; only there are tricks towards that. One is to put your helmet on a bush when you are in a tight corner and crawl away, leaving it for a target to the enemy. "I guess I'll find plenty of air-holes in it when I go back," a man remarks who has tried the ruse. He gloats over it quietly, not with the exultation of him who declares, "It makes me feel like a general when I see in the papers about the good shooting of our gun, and think that I'm responsible for it."

But they all do "their bit well," and they all repine when it comes to being out of action while there is proper "modern warfare" going on. Atkins rolls this phrase on his lips. By it a veteran who was at Omdurman, describes the South African campaign, in contrast to that of the Soudan. He speaks with medals to back up his authority. To the soldier the medal ever gleams ahead, partly for itself, but chiefly because it will be a sign and token to the folks at home. "Tell father that he isn't the only one who will have a medal. Wait till he sees me."



CORNERS OF WAR

A Briton and a Boer wage a rifle duel for half an hour without arriving at a decisive result. The former, on being hit in the right shoulder, changes his rifle to the left, and fires from the other side of the rock. This takes the Boer off his guard, and he loses the duel.

Or, we have the confidence, "I thought I wasn't to get the chance of winning a medal at all," followed by the expression of happy relief, "But now I sha'n't have to return without something to show you all." He is filled with a real joy of the medal; he sees it hanging by the fireside, his eloquent historian for all time to his blood relations. "Dear mother," we read of a soldier with four medals, "I think you ought to be proud of your son." Another son promises to return with a couple of medals, and he does not know how many bars. A bluejacket, whom a wound puts out of the war, is disturbed because "I shall not get any more bars, and I wanted to beat you, father."

A warrior who gaily adds bars to his medal, is troubled lest he may eventually have to hire a Kaffir to carry the load. "That's very well," some voice breaks in, "but I'm a long way from home." "Don't want medals," is a deliverance by itself; "I want to get home." No wonder, after a long day of the sweat of war, but always the South African morning dawns fresh and hopeful. "Good hearts, but rather sore feet," is the summary that we have from a London soldier. "We are going

to a place called Spion Kop, and I don't think it will be much of a 'kop' for our chaps. But never mind. Roll on; I suppose when we are done we shall get a medal, or a ticket for St. George's Workhouse." His is a mixed outlook.

The fame of a regiment is deeply dear to its members, and race and nationality assert themselves with a glow under the folds of the common flag. "I wonder," a guardsman asks, "if anybody still fancies that the Guards are only to be looked at?" "Forward, Gordons," cries their colonel at Elandslaagte, "the world is looking at you!" "Fix bayonets, men, and let's make a name for ourselves," shouts a colour-sergeant of Dublins, who has grown tired of being shot at. One Irish corps has a gentle quarrel with another. "We were really first at the top of the hill, not you, as has been stated. But it doesn't matter, anyhow," is the conclusion, "for we are all Irish."

Celtic, too, is the story of a regiment tired and travel-stained, which hears the bagpipes after four months' silence. "You should have seen the men throw out their chests, and put their heads back when the pipes began. You would have thought we were going off

guard instead of finishing up a march of a hundred miles." What becomes a soldier better than *esprit de corps?* and isn't pride of blood a spur to valour?

Being of London, which is a blend of the whole nation, the C.I.V.'s are a corner by themselves. One of them hears from a prisoner that the enemy have a mortal terror of the C.I.V.'s "because nothing has gone right with them since we came out." He passes on the news well pleased, and indeed under it is the spirit which achieves.

It is with a C.I.V. that the inimitable Atkins has an inimitable talk; a C.I.V. in whom the airs and graces of the West End linger, merely, however, hiding the gold beneath. We owe the story, as England owes so much, to that goodly company, Atkins's friends, the war correspondents. They are the commentators on his rawer epistles, filling up, for those who care to understand, what he leaves you to guess at; and that is the sense in which the tale is quoted, with all acknowledgment:—

"'E comes up to me," the regular reports, "an' 'e sez to me, sez 'e, 'Look 'ere, me man, where can I find your sergeant-major?'

" I looks at 'im an' I sez, ' What are you? ' sez I.

" 'E sez, ' I'm a City Imperial Volunteer,' sez 'e.

" ' Oh! ' sez I.

" ' Yus,' sez he.

" ' Yus,' sez I; ' you're a volunteer an' I'm a reg'ler,' I sez, ' an' you ain't goin' to lord it over me,' I sez, ' with yer " me man." Don't forget it,' sez I. ' I didn't get no freedom of the City,' I sez; ' the only thing the Lord Mayor ever giv' me,' says I, ' was fourteen days for fur'ous drivin',' I sez. ' I wasn't entertained to tea,' sez I, ' by all the dooks an' earls of London,' I sez. ' I wasn't 'ugged an' kissed,' I sez; ' but I'm a bloomin' previt, an' so are you, me lad.'

" ' Yus,' sez he, ' an' damn proud of it,' sez 'e.

" ' So am I,' sez I.

" ' Well, come an' 'ave a drink,' sez 'e.

" ' Right you are,' sez I; ' now you're talkin'.' "

VIII.—THE ROLL CALL

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined—just as found :
His landmark is a kopje-crest,
That breaks the veldt around.
THOMAS HARDY.

The day's high work is over and done,
And these no more will need the sun :
Blow, you bugles of England, blow !
W. E. HENLEY.

THE great throws of life may so occupy man's faculties in detail, as to cramp them in a general sense. He sees in successive patches, as from the window of a railway train, being, like it, under full steam. If it is a throw in a nation's life, this is also true, for what blows the human fire into such a roar?

Therefore, a soldier may miss any large vision of a battle, until its legacy smites him and brings perspective. For hours he has been reeking with dire combat; slaying and taking the chance of it, cursing and praying and hungry. But war has been merely so many events, until the roll is called. It is

the parade of the living and the dead; the dark lantern on what has been. Its flash has surprise, agony, realisation, a whole surge of emotions.

The mind's eye sees rows of dead men in uniform, and now realises that they are dead, for they answer not to their names. It sees the fated enemy also dotting the ground, and he has no uniform. There must be something thrice repulsive in death un-uniformed, littering the battlefield. It is startling, a shock, as if there had been a mighty accident. Death seems to have no right on the battlefield accoutred in frieze or broadcloth. Yet it smites indifferently.

"I think the worst job of the whole lot," writes a Northumbrian, "is to hear the roll called. Name after name is read out and many do not answer."

That simple, intimate touch, opens out the highway of battle, all braided with horrors, night or morn. "Blood and bandages, groans and prayers," we hear it weeping; "people talk of the glories of war. If they could only spend an hour on a battlefield, immediately after the fight, they would see little glory. It is hellish." The expression, "fair fed up

with it," is unexpected in this relationship, but it is realistic. Equally so is the coronach for the dead of Wagon Hill:

"My God! it has been a terror. The stench of human blood seems to be in my nostrils yet."

"I'm sick and tired of seeing so much blood," says a gunner, about the hard fighting in Natal. Of it, also, we have the lurid picture, "When we got into their trenches we were over the boots in blood." You pass quickly from that, only to stumble upon a Northampton who fairly shivers at the presence of the fell relics of battle. A guardsman has the same feeling, but declares that after a time one gets used even to such scenes. Still, some, a Seaforth Highlander interjects, can in no wise "stand the sight of blood and the horrors of war," and theirs is the sharpest torture. If such onlookers are themselves hurt, then ache of body accompanies the pain of the sensitive temperament.

A young warrior, who has lain on the field all the night after Elandslaagte, offers us an eerie account of the experience. A surgeon has put a field-dressing on his wound, given him a taste of brandy, and wrapped him in

the blanket of a dead Boer. Nothing more is possible that night. The wound is agony, for two sharp stones are catching the patient in the back, and his mouth burns with thirst. A torrent of cold rain does not allay this thirst, because he is unable to catch the falling drops. They merely soak him as he gazes longingly in search of the dawn, and asks himself, "Will it ever come?"

As neighbours, he has a Highlander raving in delirium, and a Boer in the rack of a shattered leg. "War is a funny game, mother," he soliloquises, "and nobody can realise all its barbarous reality." At daybreak our heroic sufferer is lifted into a doolie by a doctor, and a gang of natives carry him down the hill. "The ground was awfully rough, and they dropped me twice. I fainted both times." The wonder is that he emerges from his suffering with any gift of composure left.

"Shortly after the engagement," we get another glimpse of the Elandslaagte field, "it turned dark and it was horrible to see, or rather to feel, all around us the dead, the dying, and the wounded. We did what we could for the injured, and then lay on the

hill all night, but we could get no sleep for the cold and the rain and the moaning.".

The battlefield is not struck dumb when the fighting ceases; on the contrary, the half-life which it then has is its sorriest scar. "It is dreadful, after dark, when the lightning is playing over the faces of the wounded as well as the dead." And some clear, personal tragedy may force itself under the eyes of those who would like to shut them. No need to search for one.

"Isn't it horrible?" a horse-soldier remarks to a foot-soldier on the slope of Spion Kop; "it is more like a slaughter house." The word is scarcely uttered, when a shell falls plump beside the speaker, and he is a headless trunk, gnarled, and twisted out of all human shape. That sight alone keeps Spion Kop red for the foot-soldier during the rest of his natural life. Give us horrors in the bulk and we may forget them, but make a tragedy ours in particular, and the dye is fast in our soul.

"Slaughtermans Hill!" A Dorset thus upbraids Spion Kop, and a Middlesex likens it to a butcher's shop. A Scottish Rifleman says of his corner, "I was lying across two

dead men all the afternoon until we retired." A soldier who has been in like company reads of himself, in the casualty list, as being dead. He is not much surprised. Indeed, he might well be dead, for he had been hours with death; it is almost natural to read that he has been killed at Spion Kop. Happily he is only wounded.

That day a corporal of regulars, and a private of a colonial corps, are "doing good work," side by side, when a bullet kills the former. The latter lays out the body, and turns to the "good work" with the threat, "I'll have revenge." But his next word is, "I've got it; goodbye!" and he also dies, with a hole in his skull. A trooper mentions a case beside which sudden death would be a deliverance. "Covered with blood," his statement is about a comrade, "he begged me to shoot him and put him out of his misery." The trooper's heart is riven by the request and the spectacle, and in despair he has the impulse to run away; in despair he remains, for he can be of no assistance to the sufferer. "This is the time you feel it," a Borderer mentions, needlessly enough; yet he is thinking, in particular, of the return at

night over ground which the battle has sown—

"You are marching back when, suddenly, you come across something white, which shines out from the inky darkness. On examining it, you are shocked, perhaps, to discover that it is the dead face of a friend."

Or there may still be a spark of life left under that white skin, those fixed eyelids. Perhaps, because "It's splendid to see the fellows trying to stifle their groans," and be as whole men. Those who can, will draw at a pipe, or whiff a cigarette, which they call for short a "fag;" and the contented spirit is everywhere. On how slight a soil does it blossom!

A man has his face mutilated, his throat gashed, his chest lacerated, all the evil doing of a shell, but he is cheerful. Another is kept alive, despite his wounds, through a night bivouac, by two comrades who lie close on either side, sheltering him, keeping him warm. He is the soul of the small company. Several wounded men find themselves in a nullah, where they have crawled so as to be out of the line of fire, and their cheeriness is extreme. Twice an officer gives his coat to wounded soldiers, and each time it returns.

Has it, in these instances, become a shroud? or do the soldiers repay the officer in his own goodness? He leaves us to guess.

"I shall never," says a London Fusilier, "forget the wounded being taken to the hospital in one continuous string. You could see tears in our chaps' eyes at the sight." It is the wounded, as they go past, who have to laugh these tears away. They come out of the battle with the spirit which filled them when they entered it. A trumpeter has for days joked his gunner friend, "I bet I shall be the first to be shot." It is the froth of a high heart, nothing more, but alas! the event happens so.

"Good-night, mother," is the last message of an Inniskilling; "I'm for dangerous duty to-night. God bless you all!" But he is in no wise despondent. Should he fall, it will be as a soldier; and, please, "It is my wish that father should wear my medal every Sunday on his right breast; it is not against regulations." How the mere suggestion of red tape jars! It pulls you up with a jerk. Should our Inniskilling survive to wear the medal himself, will not his home-coming now be a triumph? Alas, there is the other picture,

and how frequently it occurs, filling you with sorrow.

A Derbyshire is losing grip of the frail hold which, as "a dangerously wounded," he has on the regimental roll. His sergeant whispers to him, "Have you any special request to make?" "You might," he answers, "write to poor mother and tell her that by the time she receives the letter, I shall be laid low." "No, chum," the sergeant tries to belie his own knowledge, "you must not give way." The Derbyshire sleeps for a spell, and on waking, whispers, "Ask mother to look after my dear children." With that he passes.

To a fond wife, in Buckinghamshire, there arrives one morning an epistle which contains the sentence, "As we are likely to go into action any day, there is no saying which letter may be the last, for it's a sure thing some of us must go. But I hope and trust that will not be my lot." The same morning the wife is widowed by an official communication, telling her that her husband has been killed. This is the hard message of the distant battlefield.

The empty pauses in the calling of the roll

bring hot tears, even from soldierly fortitude. "Lots of those who were mortally wounded" —we once more have the bitter taste of Spion Kop—"had left wives and children at home. When they knew they had got their death-wounds, it was pitiful to hear them crying to God to be merciful to their wives—not a murmur for themselves." Mother, wife, children; or it may be a sweetheart who is near, in spirit, when life goes out.

A New Zealander receives a letter from the girl he has left behind him, and her latest portrait, specially taken for him, is in it. He writes a reply, but has not been able to post it when he is called into a fight. With him go her letter, his loving answer, and the portrait, all in a breast pocket. He is of the slain, and the letters are found striped with his blood, the fatal bullet having pierced them and then the heart. He has not had time to take farewell of the portrait. The pathos of this is reflected in the message of a sailor to his sister, who has sent him her photograph. "I'll carry it with me, in case I get a bullet, so that I may have a look at it."

The chances of war let a gunner live to fight another day, although a bullet has

driven at his left breast. It lodges in a pack of cards which he has in the pocket of his khaki jacket. The point which he magnifies is not his escape, but the precise manner of it. The bullet has ended its course only before the last card of the pack, an ace of spades. Spades of another sort are needed on heights like Spion Kop, meant to be held after being carried. But where clings the kind earth in which intrenchments may be dug? The reply is the heavy casualty list, with notes on it such as the following—

"During the night we were formed up in a line and our names called. Our colonel told us that half of our men were killed and wounded, and that a lot were missing. He asked us all to pray to God to bring us through, and we did so, and also for our wounded. I cannot write any more; my heart is broken for my fallen comrades."

But ever the cheery voice is raised, "It's a rough job, still we're the boys to do it"; or, "Think only of our glorious victories, and leave the pain, the agony, and the hardships to us." What these are, we comprehend when the war-shield is turned round. "Oh yes, there's a great deal of glory in war! It

looks all right in history books for children, but there is more 'gory' than glory in it." The homily is provoked by sight of a stretcher, passing along, with an object in which there once dwelt the joy of life.

A colonel conjures his regiment, "Men, you are making a name for yourselves which will never die." "No doubt we were," soliloquises a private, "but the cost is very, very dear." Yet none will sink into a desolate grave; always somebody will be at its side to write home—

"I trust it will be a little comfort to you to know that, though he was away from friends, he was well looked after, and laid away by good people."

Hear that quick-firer, interrupting the calling of the roll, with its noise as of hammering upon a zinc roof! Watch the stern composure of the Highlanders, who hold aloof from the Christmas frivolities! They are mourning for those who are "a' wed awa'," and they are nursing vengeance. Hear George shouting for Charlie, fearful that he may be among the wreckage of the day. "At last I saw the young devil, as whole as I was, but white as the dawn, and didn't we shake hands!"

THE ROLL CALL

This is the roll-call of Spion Kop, as the conflict there is recording it; a scene better to look upon, since it has war's glow and bustle, than the quiet one that follows, when dead men's names are called.

These are the lights that rise and fall, on the making up of the accounts after a battle.

There are some so lurid that even in the hours of hottest blood they revolt unspeakably. "It was a shocking sight," we have the statement about Spion Kop; "fellows got smashed with shell, their bodies were set on fire, and there they lay being slowly cremated." Two dead men lie side by side on another hill, a shell bursts near them, and their clothes catch fire. "No water to put the fire out, and they had to burn, burn. Ugh! It was awful." But what are words here?

A Welsh soldier witnesses a scene which graves itself into his Celtic temperament, ever easiest to mould, one way or the other. He has made a cigarette with some ammunition paper and hard tobacco, and he looks round for firing to it. Yonder, apparently, blazes a small kopje fire, so he hies him towards it, but is called back by somebody. Why? Because that kopje fire is a dead body to which a shell has set a match.

After that, it is almost a minor trial for a Yorkshire, marching in the quiet of night, to trip over a corpse. "At the moment the

moon shone out, showing up his face; he seemed to be looking straight at me." The story of a Christmas card, taken from a khaki tunic, furnishes its own sad consolation. He who has put the card into the warmth of his heart is dead, but the message, "All good wishes for a happy Christmas!" is a key to the smile on the rigid lips. Death brings together, while it divides. Terrible, to us looking from the outer world, the process may appear. In reality it may be a romance, for death is full of romance; in death there is love, as well as in life.

It is good to think thus when the horrors thicken. We are told of cases where, heads being blown off by shells, the bodies remain erect for a little, or rise up from the ground, rifle clutched in the right hand, even walk several yards. "A fellow in front of me walked about three yards without his head; a shell took it clean off, and he kept on walking; it made me feel sick I can tell you." Only one detail is required to complete this gruesome spectacle. It is the assertion that a headless corpse keeps afoot until the nearest soldier, scared nigh out of his wits, pushes it over.

There are various tales of the sort, all, surely, the reddest horrors of modern warfare.

A soldier is at the "present," with his finger on the trigger, when he is hit in the temple by a bullet. Thus his body lies face to the foe, a possible dealer-out of death even then, if the almost incredible report of an affair after Spion Kop is to be accepted. For a private vouches to this—

"A man of ours was shot dead just as he was about to press the trigger, and he remained in that position and stiffened. The Boers came on the field early next morning and took several of our wounded prisoners. One walked to this man, and laid hold of his rifle to drag it away, when it went off, killing the Boer."

Death has been on the watch, and itself pulls the trigger—death the unknowable! What a creep goes with a gunner's death, as described by his friend! The latter exclaims to himself, about a shell, "Ah, that's got some of us!" He feels his limbs—"Mind you cannot tell for a minute after whether you are hit!"—and then has a look round. His comrade is down, groaning. "What's up?" "It's all right; I'm not hit; it's only

the shock." "Then don't pull such a face, old fellow!" With that the writer turns elsewhere, and on returning, to his amazement, finds his companion a corpse. A splinter of shell has penetrated the man's heart, and as for that conversation, "I think he was dead when he spoke to me."

It is undertaker's news to learn of coffins being found in a laager and burned for fuel, "as we happened to be short of firewood." Yet that is a mere pass-word to the cemetery of a battle-field; to the trenches into which the slain are put, and to the ordeal of their much-moved sextons, the survivors. "It was the worst sight of all," a Grenadier says of the interments after Belmont, "to see such fine big fellows buried like so many cattle." A sapper uses the same expression for another scene, only conceivable when it has not been possible at once to bury the dead:

"The worst sight any one can imagine is the battlefield two or three days after the battle. The dead lie all around with the sun on their faces. It is unbearable."

Burial and the unburied, they are a solemn rebuke to war. Here is its bitterest cross; here are scenes that none can look upon and

be unmoved. Atkins, the lion-hearted, weeps, and is careless of being seen in tears; his philosophy is not for the long trench, the burial service, the buglers blowing the "Last Post." Make a little anthology of his thoughts by the graveside, and you will comprehend:—

"We buried our dead at night by the light of candles—such a wonderful service; every word was spoken, every 'Amen' came from our hearts."

"When you dig graves, and put, perhaps, twenty or twenty-five men into them, in layers, till the day of Resurrection, and have to step on the ones underneath while placing the others on top, you get a bit sick of it, and believe that life is uncertain."

"It was an impressive and sad scene, there amidst the lonely veldt and kopjes, with the sun's rays covering them in their last resting place—a scene such as I never want to behold again. My thoughts wandered back to dear old peaceful Abergwili, amidst the dells and valleys of beautiful Wales. I could not help feeling sad for those away in Britain who would be watching and waiting for their loved ones."

It is the burial of the Suffolks, but the

sexton's carnival with the Highlanders is the most heart-breaking of all. "I could not sleep that night" is an engineer's simple, eloquent memory of the graveyard at Magersfontein, which he helped to dig. For him there will remain the dead faces of tartaned Scotsmen; faces set sternly northward, towards the heights.

He hears again the words of the chaplain, follows the plain, beautiful Presbyterian service, and would fain ask, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Soft and loud, wailing and defiant, the pipers have blown "The Flowers of the Forest" across that golden veldt where there is never a bloom of heather. "Lochaber no More" has cried itself out to the winds of Africa, and been carried over-seas to the Highland glens, the evil sough in the air which heralds a bleak winter.

That is how the chief and his clansmen have been buried, shoulder to shoulder, as the sun dips, and shadows, not theirs, steal into the karoo.

"I could not sleep;" but they sleep with fame for a pillow.

IX.—SMILES AND TEARS

Times when laughter and tragedy play hide-and-seek with each other, so attesting in war the great compromise of human affairs.

"WHAT gets over me," a soldier who has been shot through the foot says impressively to the doctor, "is how it ain't done more damage to my boot!"

War is an object-lesson on the near relationship of the smile and the tear, the laughable and the tragic. It brings mirth and sorrow together with a swiftness which would be unreal in anything but human nature. For it harmonises all notes, leaving us merely to marvel thereat. Deep calls to shallow, and if we put our ear to them we may hear what they call.

A sergeant of the Irish Fusiliers and an English gunner, both wounded, are assisting each other towards the camp after an engagement. Being asked how they feel, the sergeant answers, "Shure, I'm only shot in the head

and the other fellow in three places." He jokes in bullet holes.

A Yorkshireman's condition is thought to be hopeless, he, also, having a wound in the head, but he stubbornly asks for tobacco, and observes, "Ah was varry near killed once befoor, with fallin' off a house, but ah'm not dead yet, an' ah'm noan gown to dee." From him we go to a trooper who binds his hurts with the airy remark, "You don't get a cigarette every time you hit your man, like I did them pipes at Hammersmith." No doubt the resolve of the Yorkshireman and the lightsome heart of the Cockney bring them ready convalescence.

A Connaught Ranger has had his arm broken by a shot, and it dangles from the tendons. He smokes hard and curses the enemy volubly, and his comrades know not whether to sympathise with him or laugh at him. Celtic tartar is in the outburst of another Irishman, when a shell explodes close to him at Glencoe, "Och! go to blazes wid yez." He is full of anger at the idea of having to retire from Glencoe, and flings it hissing at the shell. May a flash of temper, wrung from imperfect man, not lead to a V.C. as certainly

as cool daring or valiant resignation? It is conceivable, for heroism has a score of springs, some turgid, others still, as with the wounded soldier who insists—

"I'm all right, old boy; there's lots worse than me lying around. Get them on the stretchers first; I can last out a bit. But I'll tell you what you can do. See that case of 'fags'? Well just take one out and stick it in my mouth. I've been watching it for ever so long, but I could not pick it up. I'd give anything for a smoke."

The speaker has both arms broken, and is greedily eyeing a cigarette-case two yards distant from the rock against which he has propped himself. He can read on the little treasure, the words, "From Alice to Fred in memory of happier days;" and he cannot dry the starting tears. A touching order is given to a regiment as it marches into Ladysmith, just relieved: "You must not smoke while you are passing through, on account of the poor fellows who have been shut in." They must first be set a-smoking, having long wanted the good cheer; having lived a life to which there applies this story of a sergeant, invited to take his share in a musical evening:

He can play or sing? "Oh yes," he answers, "I can do the bones, but I've ate 'em." Nor are the highlands of Natal, in the stress of the campaign over their wide area, a land flowing with milk and honey for Atkins. Still in his half-hours of ease, amid the hours of toil, he is eager to be entertained, as witness this:

"I happened to find a bit of looking-glass. It made a rare bit of fun. As it was passed from comrade to comrade we said, 'Have a last look at yourself, my boy, and bid yourself goodbye.' The laugh went round; then 'Advance!' and we were all at it again."

Jack ashore discovers comedy to amuse the army, in the military khaki into which his own ship-shape form has been trussed. "I do look comical in it. I'm going to bring it home if I live long enough, and then you'll just see how I look. Blue Devils is the name the Boers give us!" No wonder. "We are ashore with the *Terrible's* ammunition, *Powerful's* guns, and our own men. What price that? Powerful guns, Terrible ammunition, and the men are all Tartars." Jack carries his command of graphic language with him by land and sea.

A cherub of a middy, with a handful of bluejackets, is sent to get some ammunition from a gun-pit. The place is waist deep in water, and the boy, while seeking for the ammunition, falls in and is nearly drowned. Fortunately he seizes a floating railway sleeper, and on it sails back to firm ground, and to the humour of his ducking. "Ah, this is a gun-pit, is it? I suppose it's a bally army gun-pit." The bluejackets take him off to camp and to bed, lest he should catch cold and die. They cannot spare him.

A colour-sergeant gallantly saves four wounded men from drowning in the flooded Tugela. As he climbs the bank with the last of them an officer takes his name, and a minute later a flying bullet takes his life. Valour is the name of that nameless colour-sergeant; valour, and a heart for the smitten comrade. It is a royal service to die in. Who would discern a grave at the end of such an approach to it as, "Be jabers, this is a fine counthry for a soldjier; ye gets a bhlade of grass six inches high, and ye finds cover behind it, and when it gets to the last inch, be jabers, look out!" That is his satire about seeking cover when there is none to be ob-

tained. Well, the worse the situation, the more an inspiriting lilt is needed:

"When 'Long Tom' was dropping ninety-six pound shells round about us, some one starting singing, 'Why did I leave my little back room in Bloomsbury?' and the whole lot took it up. It did sound funny!"

"Foightin', sorr; can't help it—couldn't resist the music any longer." This is the defence of an Irish regimental cook, found in the fighting-line instead of in his kitchen. "And the other cooks—where are they?" "They're foightin' too, sorr; couldn't help it, sorr; all making good practice, sorr." Perhaps it is the same warrior who observes of another, hit three times in quick succession, "Why, the Boers must have taken him for the runnin' man." And we do discover a running man, though in a different sense.

A soldier has reported himself sick, is excused by the doctor from going with his company on outpost duty, and is in his tent all alone. There he is invaded by a wandering shell, which, knocking over the box that he sits on, sends him sprawling. It buries itself without bursting, and so no harm is done, but as for our sick soldier, "I can tell you he

soon put on his straps and ran after his company. You should have seen his face; you would have died laughing." Seeing it, we should be asking ourselves, " What is fright —simple, physical fright? "

It invades the bravest man, and as a panic it will seize upon a body of the bravest men. Fright! Perhaps it is the refusal of the mind, unnerved by some great surprise or shock, to act its part as governor of the body. Tone and power have to be recovered, and then fright and panic are cast forth with loathing. They are like the wind of the desert; no man knows whither they come, in what element of an incident they may lurk. A soldier has fallen to a shot in the shoulder, and is being lifted on to his feet by companions.

" That instant a bullet struck the ground at his feet and he started off, running as hard as he could go, with the other two after him. We were in deadly peril, yet the humour of the situation was irresistible. It was too absurdly funny! "

No sense of scare unnerves a Berkshire, who naïvely writes home, " Tell father I shall get the V.C. for promptitude in taking advantage of all cover as per drill book." This is the

method of the young hopeful, using that phrase seriously, for no doubt it was once so used, only disappointment overtook it. There is also large promise in a young soldier who hits off the martinet officer in the following manner:

"One man was in trouble for trying to persuade a fly to shift off his nose by screwing his face up. The charge was 'laughing on parade.'"

As a commentator pithily observes, "It was enough to make a 'bus horse laugh." The 'bus horse, converted into a charger, carries the alphabet of our London street traffic to the front. We are bidden rejoice over the animal "in our regiment" which will stop if you shout "Off-sider up!" He is less gifted, however, than the beast which thus brightens the march to Spion Kop:

"We were talking about the different funds for widows and orphans, and somebody behind asked which was the best. My chum called out, 'Mansion House,' whereupon my horse stopped dead, and would not move till there arose the cry, 'Higher up, please.' Then he went on slowly, all of which showed us that he was one of the old London 'bussers."

The store of mirth that Atkins discovers in his own appearance is inexhaustible, but the wrinkles of suffering and hardship lurk in the background. "We are getting a fine high-bred look," says a sergeant who has starved in Ladysmith. The mystery about a particularly stout Highlander is how he keeps stout, until it dawns upon himself, "Why, I must be full of breeze." He shakes in his shoes at the prompt banter, "Man Jock, gin ye get shot I'll howk ye oot for a sentry-box."

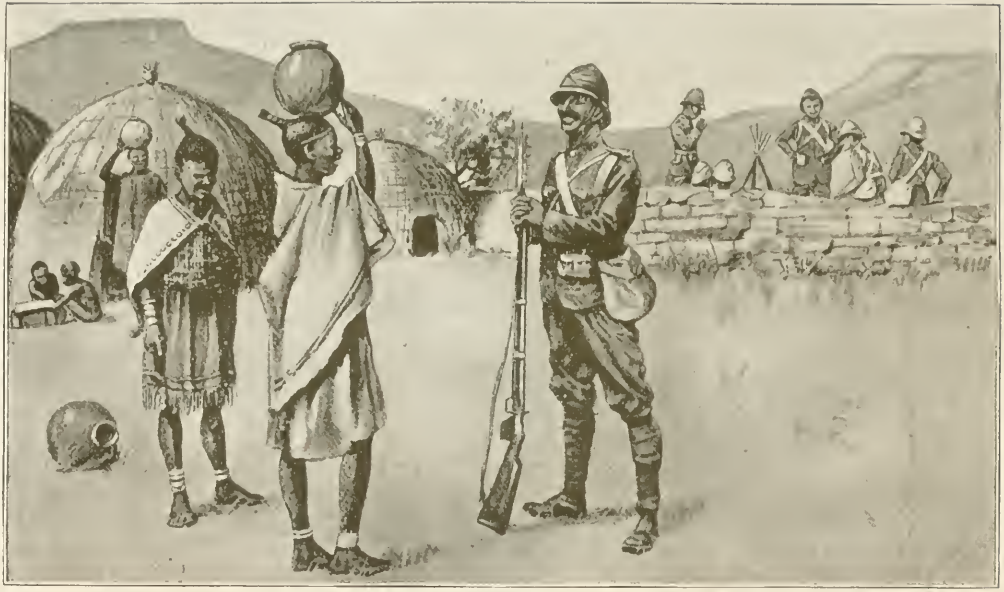
A neighbour of his presently goes jumping about in the zone of fire, and when warned to lie down, explains his conduct—"Just haud a wee till I catch this lark." It is not so apparent an amusement as the holding of a helmet above a stone, in order that it may have airholes, to keep the head cool, drilled through it by the enemy. "When I am walking about," we get the confidence, "the fellows who don't know how it was done, exlaim, 'It's a marvel that bloke's alive.'" He chuckles to himself, but one morning he forgets, and raises the helmet with his head in it.

The hand of the wag is apparent in an order for which some church parade is made responsible, "Presbyterians must go washed;

Church of England may go unwashed." Small things are seized upon for laughter, as when one of Roberts's Horse, being left on the veldt, approaches a casual Cockney with the inquiry, "Have you seen anything of Roberts's Horse?" and is answered, "No, has he lost it? What's its colour? I have a spare pony here which he can have if it's any use to him." Nor would it be a bad mount if it happened to be "Black Diamond," an animal of which a trooper is never tired of speaking. They are great friends, and they form a pleasant study of man and beast.

"Black Diamond" is real, natural, friendly as a talking horse that an excellent fellow educates against the tedium of Ladysmith; but the story of a South African baboon is not convincing. A soldier is supposed to catch sight of a figure atop a kopje, to charge after it with eager ferocity and a gleaming bayonet, and to drive the latter into it, shouting in triumph, "I've got an inimy at last, bedad!" The indignant owner of the pet baboon, a mirth-rent company officer, and the bewildered Pat are then gathered round the corpse, and there dramatically left.

An ostrich hunt, with a brigade looking



SMILES AND TEARS

War and warfare are not all death or glory. They have their hours in lighter vein; their smiles as well as their tears; and Atkins melts to both. Here we see some of the smiles.

on, brings us back to the affairs of sheer fun, of wayward frolic. "We found a quiet-looking old chap carrying some very nice feathers. We got friendly with him by giving him some of our biscuits. But when my chum made a grab at his tail the ungrateful 'chicken' landed out with his left bunch of claws. They caught Bob just where his dinner ought to have been, and we haven't chased 'chickens' since then." A large bird to write about, the ostrich!

A soldier-father hears that Emmie's linnet has died since he left home, and asks shall he bring a young ostrich to replace it? True, it will eat more than the lintie and be a trouble to look after when it grows up, but then think of its beautiful feathers! Aye, and of a father's love! How beautiful it shines in this, the last letter of a soldier cast for the grave:

"My own, it steels my arms and quickens my blood, as I think of you and our dear little Jack. I can see you in my mind's eye tenderly bending over him as he sleeps, and imprinting a kiss on his little chubby face. May our Heavenly Father keep and guard him until I return."

But turn—turn quickly—to some other letter, and read, for relief, the odd inquiry of a Highlander, "Did you ever taste commandeered chicken?" Perhaps not. "It's sublime," he guarantees. The humour of the private commissariat is considerable, though with it there often goes the clamour of an empty stomach. An Irishman happens upon five eggs and boils them, only to lift up his voice in subsequent despair. "Oh, wasn't I surprised when I found that it was chickens I had been cooking." Still hungry, he encounters a gander, and putting it in the pot blows the fire with relish.

He does not tell us whether, for sauce, he mixes starch with pepper-corns and calls the result blanc-mange. That recipe belongs to one of the besieged of Ladysmith, and he gives this fair warning, "Tell mother to keep her starch locked up when I come home." A Yorkshireman also intimates a habit which he may be expected to observe as a result of long active service:

"I've forgotten what it is like to be at home; tell Charlie I'm going to pitch a tent in the garden with strong intrenchments and wire entanglements all round."

An artilleryman threatens to bring home an army biscuit as a relic, feeling sure it will not get broken on the way, unless somebody jumps on it. "I shall," he reasons, "be able to look at it in my grey-headed old age and say, 'I wish I had as good teeth now as I had then.'" The reticent story of a "terribly big chap, six feet one, and awfully thin," is very appealing as told by a comrade:

"He is always hungry, I know, though he never complains. I saw him cooking mealies the other day. He said he was cooking them for his horse, but I knew better."

A member of the Town Guard of Kimberley is ill and in hospital. "Have you any idea," inquires the doctor, "what's the matter with you?" "No, sir," he replies, "but I have pains in my stomach." "You have no idea what causes them?" "No, sir, unless it be the horse wandering after the mealies." Listen to the same rumble of want from a troop of lancers who are on the hills of Ladysmith, and to whom the orders for the day announce "quarter rations." "The men's jaws dropped six holes," says one of the lancers, "but there wasn't a word." A little later somebody cries, 'What's that there?'

Good God! Could it be true, or were we dreaming?" They catch sight of the advance guard of the relief column.

Beside that drama of hunger and hope, of valour and stern endurance, a stretcher-bearer with his trousers tied at the bottom, is the clown. They are full of peaches, gathered from some orchard, and the wearer of them is a subject for vast general merriment, ending in the suggestion from waggish Atkins, "Say, old fellow, why don't you turn yourself into a penny-in-the-slot machine!" The plight of an amateur cook is different; he has not allowed for the swelling of a pudding, and therefore cannot get it out of the pot. Probably the pot is "accidentally broken"—some formula is necessary; but we are not told. Another military cook is franker. "It happens to be my day to cook," he says, "which accounts for the unpleasant expression on some of the fellows' faces." He is not certain whether it is the flour or the suet that he has left out of a "duff," but anyhow his comrades, having eaten, are unanimously silent. They break their silence to christen him "Lyddite."

We are soon tripping over the heart-strings

again. Wives and children are gladdening to think about, but black may braid the bright. "It quite humanised us," a soldier says, "to see women and children once more!" We have the shadow from a second soldier who happens upon a child's wealth of toys and dolls, tiny cups and saucers, all overthrown by the tide of war. He thinks of the absent smiles of the little one, driven from her toys, and soliloquises, "When war comes, does it let anybody escape its touch? War! This also is war! It is the siege of mankind." Worse to a King's Royal Rifleman than a siege is the raising of it, for it brings him a mourning letter. His father is dead, and the lament is, "I knew he was looking forward to my coming home."

A sermon to which a guardsman listens is all about those he talked with the previous morning, and helped to bury at night; and he is filled with sadness. But there is a "Lead, kindly light" even amid "the encircling gloom" of the battle. "Thank God you have arrived; I have been looking for you all the morning,"—this is the greeting of a wounded man to a comrade who is searching for him. "He and I were jesting, coming out

on the ship, and I said I would be the one to pick him up if he fell, and so I was." It is the exchange of brotherliness.

There is, too, an exchange of humour, at all events of humorous things and situations, as between Atkins and the enemy. The former rigs up a dandy lancer, all straw and khaki, and the latter hammer it with the big guns—" knocked particular blank out of it," is the satisfying phrase of an artilleryman—until they also discover the joke. During a Sunday armistice at Mafeking a Boer cries to the trenches of the besieged, " Have you any whiskey? " The cry back is " Yes," and an invitation to call for it; but no, " he isn't having any."

Excellent is the yarn from Ladysmith about some Boers who, under the folds of a flag of truce, are passing the time of day with Atkins. " They told us," it goes, " that the British prisoners at Pretoria were short of two men for the football team. And so the Boers had been asked to capture a half-back and a right wing forward from the Gordons." This would be a new way of conducting war, but then much has been new and surprising.

A trumpeter and his friends discover that,

at a concert they have organised in a dull townlet on the veldt, "One of the singers, a little Dutch girl, gave the Boer version of the battle of Majuba—in Dutch, of course. Our fellows cheered the speaker like mad, making it appear, in our high conceit, that we understood. But when an old farmer quietly explained the meaning of the song—well, there was a silence." However, the laugh is the other way when a Boer, fancying he is on the spoor of his own people, runs into a British patrol. "Ach! I dink I haf made a mistake!" "Yes, I should think you have; give us your rifle."

Again, the expansive story-telling Tommy! He is also in a tale from Pieters Hill, of a Boer throwing down his Mauser and saying, "Don't shoot me; I'm a field cornet." "I don't care a hang if you're a brass band," is the effulgent retort; "hands up!" That token of surrender is needless; the joke is enough to petrify a commando of Boers. It makes you sigh for the Scotsman of Ladysmith, whose "mineral rights," as he holds, cover a "Long Tom" shell that has buried itself in his garden. He has finish.

Quip and crank and wise humour we may

gather at leisure wherever Atkins camps. But they are the froth, the pretty spume on the surface, and when the wind lifts them aside the gulfs of despond are seen yawning.

An Africander lady tells a sympathising English soldier that she has a husband and two sons; that her sons are fighting on one side, her husband on the other; and that he lives in dread lest he may slay the children of his own body.

Her dread is still greater.

X.—IN HOSPITAL

Red-letter tales from a telling-house where hurts and ills are borne with simple fortitude, robust cheerfulness, a gay philosophy.

A SOLDIER is brought in from the battlefield, which has taken a butcher's toll of his once handsome face. He overcomes the tragic silence that has fallen upon him by asking, in signs, for a sheet of paper and a pencil. They are given to him.

Naturally he will want to know what the doctors think of his case, whether there is any hope for him? That is the way when a waft of the last trump comes from afar; Nature hesitates to surrender the spirit, the great sceptre of being, because, losing it, she loses all.

Only a noble soul may enter this fight with the flesh and emerge victorious, but our soldier is splendidly victorious. It is not of himself he is thinking, as he toils out his question in straggling letters. What is it? It is this: "Did we win?"

The heroism of Atkins in hospital has been a light, lighting all the darkness there. But first, is he wounded, cast away, in some corner of the embattled veldt? His chief anxiety, so a nurse informs us, is whether he will be found, since a fight with long-range arms scatters the victims over an immense stretch of ground. It is strange what torture for the mind there lies in the uncertain. A broken leg, a broken arm! These are, and are what they are, but the thought, "Suppose they don't find me?" drags the mind to the edge of an abyss.

When the searchers arrive the black uncertainty lifts, and broken limbs are merely an occasion for self-sacrifice. "We started to go forward," says a member of an ambulance corps, "and soon came across lots of wounded. Some, who were so badly hit that they could hardly stand, were helping others. On our offering aid they answered, 'No, no, my lads; lower down you'll find many who can't move.'"

On to those others, this being Colenso, where the swathe of the scythe is wide. "All around us we heard cries of 'Water, water, for the love of God!' A man would take just a little although we kept saying 'Have more.'

He would answer, 'No, there are still others ahead.'" No man is for himself, but all are for the relief of those in suffering elsewhere.

"They showed the utmost pluck and endurance," an eminent surgeon testifies about the wounded at Colenso; "there was no despondency, but on the contrary anxiety to return to the fight. This was very splendid of them after such a day as they had experienced, and makes one feel proud of their fine mettle."

"My brave man!" It is the praise of Joubert to an English reservist, with thigh-bone and ankle broken, who has only desisted from fighting when he has no more cartridges. His shattered limbs get into a tangle as he falls beneath his wounds, and he seems helpless there on the ground. But a comrade carries out his request, "Turn me over, Jack," and then he can load and shoot, heedless of his torture. Brave man indeed! It is an honour afterwards to shake his hand.

A wounded Irish officer, as one of his friends in the rank and file narrates, is being carried down a kopje on a stretcher. A bearer trips on a rock, and the officer is jolted so that his pains cry doubly. But he says, thoughtfully,

"All right, orderly, I know you couldn't help it!" That is the good heart which will not let another bear the pain of self-reproach; the heart which wins all to itself and is the conqueror even after it has ceased to beat.

"What bothered me," remarks a soldier, who has been hit five times, "was the shot that went through my lungs, because it caused me to breathe short." He has nothing to tell of the other four bullets, and would have been silent altogether, but for that detail. Then there is the warrior who is asked, "Are you much hurt?" and who answers, "Oh, not so bad. I've just got a graze on the head, a bullet through the arm, and a second in my ribs, which I'm carrying back to camp." Of such is the road to the hospital.

"It's a treat," a colonial declares, "to see the Tommies—we're all Tommies now and joyfully!—when their wounds are being dressed. You may ask them twenty times if they are feeling any pain and they will say "No,' or 'Only a trifle,' until at last they collapse." The evidence in support of this is extensive and peculiar.

A Northumbrian boasts of a Christmas box, and then describes it as a quarter of an

ounce of lead in his leg. He is less well dowered than the fellow of jest, who being hailed, "How did you get on, Bill?" shouts back, "Got a bally lead mine in me. Want to stake out a few claims?"

A Highland captain is carried to the doctors in a state of varied damage. He has been hit seven times, and the doctors have to cut off his gay tartans to get at his wounds; yet he is cheerful. Before settling down to a severe amputation he dictates a letter to his mother. His report to her is, "I have had several severe knocks—pretty hard knocks." That, he thinks, will reassure her, but he forgets that a mother's instincts are as actual knowledge.

We happen upon a lancer "in dock for repairs," as he calls it, but still grandly full of the glamour of combat. For excitement, he holds that "shells and bullets beat football altogether." They are such splendid playthings! But he lets his doubts appear in the postscript, "This leaves me with a smile on my face, only I'll say goodbye, lest we should never meet again." He sees the shadow of a long, last separation.

It is almost at hand for a stricken soldier and his sweetheart overseas. "Wouldn't you,"

the nurse asks him, " like to send a message to anybody—anybody in particular? " He understands, and the woman's tact which has informed him, floods his heart with the absent woman. " Yes," he mutters, " I would like to send a message—a message to my girl." " What shall I say? " inquires the nurse, putting the point of her pencil to the paper. She waits gently on the dying man's emotion, struggling to express itself. " Yes," he whispers, " give her my kind regards."

A knight of tenderness is Atkins for his womankind—sweetheart and wife, mother and Queen. " Sister, sister," a patient in hospital enjoins, " lock my box of chocolate up at once. If you don't, I'll eat it, and I want mother to get it quite perfect by the first mail." To the soldier who is well, that chocolate is an inspiration; but to the soldier wounded or ill, it is sacred. It is the Mother-Queen visiting his bedside, as it were, with a greeting which falls on his ear as home and love and country —all that is dear and true and good. " Oh, that her Majesty could have beheld the joy which shone in the face of many a sufferer." The extract is from a letter which goes on:—

" A poor fellow lay in bed badly wounded,

and as we told him of the gift of the Queen a light came into his pale, pain-drawn face, which a pen like mine can scarcely describe. The two attendants raised him, while the sergeant-major held up the book, and in that position, and with a happy, worn smile, he wrote his name. Then I handed him the chocolate and he sank back exhausted, and presently he fell asleep. When I passed round at night, I stopped by his side, and saw that in his sleep he still clutched the precious packet."

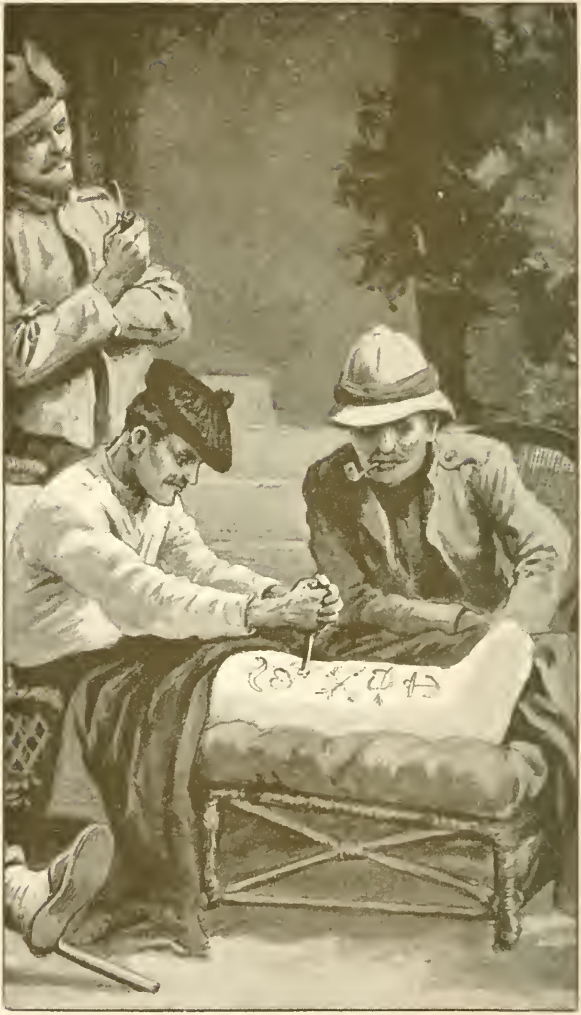
It is sweet to dream sweetly. Dreamland is free to all, calling soul to soul, in adversity, as in happy circumstances. "To-night," we hear a voice from over the wall which divides war into sides—"to-night I was on duty in the Dutch Prayer House which is our hospital. An Englishman began, in his dreams, to sing quite softly, first a soldier's song, then 'Rule Britannia' and finally—and so softly—that touching song, 'Home Sweet Home.'" No catalogue would hold the touching incidents of the war hospitals, nor is a catalogue the place for them.

"Take it to my pal first," an orderly is ordered about a water-bottle; "he's worse

hit than I am." The speaker is dead next morning, while his comrade lives to mourn for him. "Being told," another tragedy reads, "that my poor old chum was dying, I hurried to his bedside. He was raving for his wife. I tried to soothe him, but of a sudden he sprang up and with a cry for his wife, fell back in my arms—dead." The manner of his going—that cry for her—will be her poor consolation.

A corporal of the Argylls, who has had his scalp shot away, is asked how he feels. Without answering the question, he demands in broad Scots "Hoo's Captain Cawmill?" This is the officer of his company, his immediate chief of the Campbell line. He is all concern for him. Young Highland chieftains used to go into the reek of battle, with foster-brothers beside them for guardian angels. The sentiment which was there still lives beneath the tartan.

Sentiment often makes sunshine, and in unexpected ways and quarters. When a soldier has fallen, his kit is put to auction, and in their regard for him, his comrades name their best money against its contents. They know that there may be a widow, a



In Hospital

Atkins in hospital is, as he would say himself, "a sight"—a king in cheerfulness. Has he a broken leg, and it set in plaster of Paris? He lightens the hours by trying to carve himself into "a plaster saint."

mother, or orphans, to whom the amount realised will be a godsend. A Suffolk is reported killed, his kit is therefore sold, and the proceeds, with his deferred pay, are transmitted to his mother. She is lifted from her sorrow, and out of her threadbare black frock, a month or two later, when she hears that her son is still alive. He is getting well in one of the enemy's hospitals, having with his sore wounds, been succoured by them after the fight.

Hatred between the opposing men engaged in war is infrequent, as we gather from scenes ever recurring in the hospitals. A Yorkshire sergeant has "a Boer for a bed chum," and the pair make friends in a great way. Another Briton and another Boer find it convenient to be as brethren. They have only a right and left arm between them, for each has lost one. At first they receive their allowances of tobacco in despair, not being able to roll it into cigarettes. "Here, mate," suggests the resourceful Atkins, "just you move a bit closer, and we'll give a hand each to the cigarette-making." Thus they surmount the difficulty.

Tobacco smoke is special comfort for the

man on his way from the fighting line to the hospital. "Never mind my leg, let that look after itself; be a good chap and give us a pipe; I'm dying for a smoke." Next day the speaker of these words has his leg taken off by the surgeons. An East Anglian, shot through the groin, exclaims to himself, "Well, I'd better have a smoke." This is the spirit of resignation which belongs to the whole army of wounded, or, as a witness puts it:—

"You scarcely hear a murmur; in fact dying men have asked me for a cigarette."

A boy soldier who is being operated upon, confides to the surgeon, "I wouldn't care, only I've lost my 'fags.'" He does not go smokeless, though he is in hospital, nor does a convalescent who is up and sitting about. He is an engaging character, as behold his intimation, "There is a gentleman here who gives two cigars to every soldier passing his house. I've come in for four, having passed twice." A mere accident that? The gentle craft, as of an angler casting for a trout, quite disarms one's censure. There is a more serious case against the writer of the following:—

"I should doubtless have been on my back in that hospital now, had it not been for a

wondrous duplicity that taught me how to manipulate the thermometer so as to make my temperature normal. The result of the harmless fraud was that I got an ounce of whiskey and a pint of soup per day. Oh the joy of that whiskey! "

Perhaps it turns him to the making of jokes. " It's a funny thing," a rifleman notes, " but upon my word I've heard more wit from fellows who have been wounded, than I have heard in times of peace." A Londoner, with injuries that look deadly, strikes up a lively song, and even contrives to sing it in tune. An Irishman who has been battered like a target shouts to his ward neighbour, in the tone of one who has made a discovery, " Why, thim Boers can't shoot for nuts." He recovers. It is an Irishman gifted with a genial sarcasm who calls to his nurse, " Be jabers, bring me a tin whistle and I'll play the ' Cock o' the North.' " Nay, he is hopeful that his broken leg, while it holds him to bed, will yet permit him to play any other tune the company would desire. " What's yer choice, ladies and gentlemen? " he demands.

But if he were to play, it might tempt a

Dublin Fusilier to dance, and he admits, ruefully, that a hole in his leg has ended his dancing days. "Still," he cheers himself up, "I'll be as good a singer as ever, and I'll raise sport wherever I am, as my heart is as light as a feather." Many courageous hearts ride into hospital, in a string of ambulances, for out of these depths comes the mocking echo, "Bank, Bank; penny all the way!" A full private innocently flings at a general officer the inquiry, "Hullo, where have they hit you, old cock? Strike me lucky, they've 'kopped' me in three places." The officer laughs.

"You would be amazed," a nurse comments, "to find how men recover who have been riddled with bullets. Such wounds do remarkably well, and I think I'm sorriest for the soldiers attacked by dysentery and typhoid. They feel it greatly, and would much rather be wounded; they look on it as a disgrace to be in hosptial for any other reason." No sooner said than a Grenadier appears with proof of it.

"I'm afraid," he confesses, "that the fever has put a top hat on me, as it has shortened my breath and weakened my legs. All the same I have a litle bit of strength left for

Pretoria, and I should break my heart if I were left here."

It must be as difficult to be a hero after an attack of typhoid as to be a hero to the proverbial valet. To quote a Royal Fusilier, who speaks from ill experience, "You aren't in the best of spirits when your internal economy feels like a skittle alley in full swing."

The interest of Atkins in medical matters yields us the deliverance, "No man can fight his best on an empty stomach." But the doctors explain it by saying that they can cure a man of a wound in the stomach if he has fasted for twelve hours beforehand. "Personally I'd prefer to have a feed and take my chance." This is rather a cryptic deliverance, like so many things that bother our curiosity, especially in the epistles of Atkins; only the last sentence is clear enough, and clearly enough sincere. Perhaps rations have been short somewhere, or we should not be getting those views on the best stomach for a fight.

Obviously it is a good one that permits a Black Watch private to joke, in hospital, after Magersfontein, "I'm the living wonder; shot six times and won't kill." Then an Irishman

—for the hurt Irishman, with humour gushing from him, is prevalent—walks into a field-hospital and remarks, "Dochtir, I jist want 'e to take from my jaw here, a bullet that's knocked out two of my teeth." "Sit down! Is that the only place where you feel pain—where the bullet is?" "That's all, and that's plinty." "No pain elsewhere?" "Sorra bit; only I'm confused like." "No wonder; the bullet got into your jaw through the top of your head."

A wound there robs a Gordon Highlander of consciousness. He has been charging at the head of his company and crying "Come on, boys! Come on, boys!" A bullet in the knee, a second in the thigh, a third in the ribs, but on he rushes like a Highland torrent. A fourth in the head "drops" him, and in hospital, he keeps shouting, "Come on, boys! Come on, boys!" He will have four bullets to carry home as keepsakes, for Atkins, while he may be indifferent to wounds, treasures the shot and shell that inflict them.

His treasures are a collection. An hospital sister has a patient who opens his hand to show her a ring. "From my girl," he says, "and when I was hit I made up my mind

that no enemy should get it, so I kept it in my hand ready to swallow if necessary." A young soldier, just arrived in hospital, asks excitedly for his haversack. He clings to it desperately, all because there are two small turtles inside. He has collected them against the return to "England, home, and beauty," and that is why he values them, rather than for themselves.

To the surgeon or the nurse, who has been his good friend, we find Atkins rich in gratitude. "Doctors very busy," he says shrewdly; "a fine place this for the young hands to get practice." He is willing to fall in love with the nurse who has smoothed his pillow, and written tenderly to the wife of his "dead chum." We love those who serve in the name of sympathetic love; and moreover a nurse may be an attractive little woman. Listen to this outpouring of heart, all provoked by her:

"The nurse attending me was a handsome girl with a Greek profile, reddish brown hair —the kind that seems full of golden tendrils in the sunlight—and eyes as liquid as a fawn's. The first time she put her finger on my wrist my pulse run up to at least a hundred and

seventy-five, and she took it for granted that I had a high fever. I tried often to allure her into conversation, but she wouldn't be lured. She was strictly business.

"When I started to pay her compliments she would ask me to put out my tongue, which is an obstacle to conversation. I used to lie there with my tongue hanging out, trying to put my whole soul into my eyes, but it was no go. No man can look romantic with half a foot of furry red tongue. Another way she had of gagging me was by putting the thermometer in my mouth. She was an excellent young woman, with lots of common sense, as was evidenced by the fact that she gave me no encouragement whatever."

Happily our love-sick patient does not threaten any desperate act as a result of his disappointment. His heart mends, like the rest of him.

XI.—ONE TOUCH OF NATURE

Showing the threads that knit fighting men in a common brotherhood, even while they wrestle for mastery, in the scarlet surge of war.

THE story of a Briton and a Boer who meet in arms and part in affection illustrates that one touch of nature which makes all the world kin, even when war does rage.

Those two drive at each other on a kopje, each seeking the other's life, which is the trade of the battle. The hand-to-hand struggle falls out so evenly that both are wounded, and both go, in the same ambulance, to a British hospital. In it they lie neighbours, grow firm friends, and vow the friendship shall live. Then when the time for parting comes the Briton exclaims, as the last word of the good-bye, " Wasn't it a fine thing we met! "

It is a joy to watch how personal amity springs from under the harrow of national strife. Touch the right spot and the roll of guns dies out in a quiet conversation and an exchange of home thoughts. The coming

together may be by a lurid road, but mutual respect lights it, and that is much.

"He sat above me on a rock smoking his pipe and taking deliberate pot shots at me," says a Borderer about an antagonist. "Such impudence could not be borne, and by a lucky fluke I put him out of action at my fourth shot."

Out of action! The phrase here takes a new meaning, so delicate that you might overlook it; for sympathy and regard, as of one fighting man towards another, are meant to be conveyed. Thanks be that the other duellist is only wounded! Let him live to fight another day; it is enough to overcome him in the duel. The winner has none of the lust of killing, and would regret the full tragedy; indeed his victory is greater.

Being a hero, Atkins esteems the higher qualities in others, and the harder they make the fight for him the greater is this esteem. "It is impossible," we read in one letter, "not to admire the show these fellows have made, but it's all so useless." "I rather like them," another scribe sets down, "for the way they are standing up for their country." And then of a leader, "You cannot help ad-

miring him; after all, he is a rare game one." When men are seeing the other world in each other's eyes, they do not look for the baser qualities of this world. Test that by the challenge which occurs in the rank-and-file history of Colenso, as being flung, from Irishmen to Irishmen, across the Tugela:

"Just before the fight the Irish Brigade with the Boers sent a note to our Dublin Fusiliers, saying they would be glad to have the opportunity of wiping them out. The note was returned by the Dublins with the promise that they would walk through the Irish Brigade as the devil walked through Athlone."

This sounds fierce, but is it anything more than a gay defiance, a mutual contract to fight the thing as Christians should? There the Irish speak for the two camps, and, indeed, the Irish nature, so rich in imagination, so quick of sympathy, has often been a link between races unlike each other in their ways. There may even be a drawing closer in a frank upstanding fight, the creation of a mutual respect, for out of evil cometh good. When men meet, in the presence of Providence, they do not part as they met; a new

relationship has sprung up. Formal enemies, being thrown together on the knees of the gods, may then begin a friendship.

Beautiful and becoming are such friendships. They thrive on some common element of nature, and royal here is the love towards little children. "I thought of you and the little ones," a tender-hearted Atkins tells his wife about a hand-to-hand fight with an opponent. He does so in explanation of the manner in which it closes: "He prayed for mercy, and told me he had four little children at home." The thoughts of Atkins also fly home; he has fought daggers, but mingled tears are the outcome.

"How is my little Kitty? My love to her and to you." The letter is short, for the "fall-in" has sounded, but it is all complete, and sweet as an idyll. The other camp has the same tender breath of affection in a letter to "My dear Otto," a small fellow, though he is at the front. His big sister, who mothers the family, is anxious to visit him, "Only I suppose you could hardly find a place free from draught for baby!"

Oversea comes the same kingly prattle to a Welshman, as we discern in his self-com-

muning, "I am thinking of the children every day and every night." Are they growing into girlhood or boyhood? Then so much the dearer are they. A Boer enters the British lines, thus giving himself up a prisoner, in order that he may be with his boy, who has been wounded and left on the field. A company of Cornwalls have a string of prisoners in charge, among them a bright, comely lad of twelve. He has been in the wars, shouldering a rifle, and has been shot in the legs. "Very pathetic," says one of the Cornwalls, "but you bet we are looking after him!"

"Give my love to the children and acquaintances," a Dutch woman charges her husband who is in laager, and who later finds a grave on the veldt. "My dear husband," the letter runs on in tears, "I hope to meet you again on earth, and if not, then in heaven." She finishes with the pen, as her own expression is, but not with the heart. Not less sad is the tragedy of a British soldier of the reserve, who on his marriage-day had received orders to join the colours. Marriage, and married life, are measured in hours for him, since he is to meet death in a bayonet-charge. The sweetheart he made wife, and was torn from, is

quickly robbed of her orange blossom and given crape.

There is winning drama in the story of how a Boer farmer comes between a little English girl and the fangs of a snake. Two soldiers have him under escort, he being a prisoner, and they are passing the child at play on the road. She stoops to pick up what, at a first glance, appears to be a stick. With a cry of warning the Boer leaps from between his escort, and in a moment has his heel on the head of a wriggling snake. He soothes and kisses the frightened child, and turns to the soldiers with the apology, "She was just like my own leedle girl." They are his guard of honour for the rest of the journey. They swing along, carrying his humble bundle of baggage, now on one rifle-barrel, slung shoulder-high, now on the other. Nothing is too good for him.

"To my dear little son," a Dutch mother pours out her heart, in a long letter signed, "Your Never-Forgetting Mother." Its language is the language of all mothers who have sons in the precincts of risk and danger. And all those sons will read in reverence—the reverence of each son for his own mother—

the story of motherly affection which we have in these passages:

"Oh, Davie! it seems as if you and your father had been away a year. I weary much and cannot endure it any longer, and I tremble when I read that the guns may shoot you. But, my child, I believe that God will preserve us and bring us together again. Oh, my child! I have no rest here—I only wish to get away to you. At one time I got as far as the station, when I had to turn back."

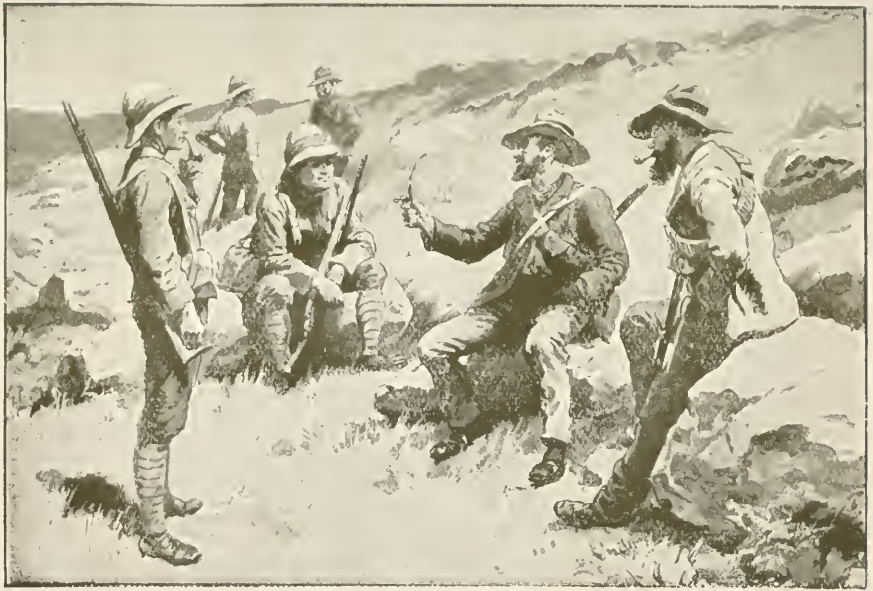
She is met by the iron regulations which possess a country in time of war, and even a mother cannot thrust them aside. But within them there is room for the good deed, the kind act; for the exercise of that charity, which, happily, belongs to mankind. "Don't believe in hitting a man that's down," observes a C.I.V. of a prisoner who, from a passing railway truck, has asked for a drink of water; "so I passed him my water-bottle, and tears came into his eyes when he said. 'Tank you; it vas good.'"

The service is returned when the Boers bring fruit to a relay of soldiers engaged in the burial of the dead. Even it is returned direct to a C.I.V., for we have one telling us

how well he fares at a Dutch farmhouse. He is given eggs and bread, all for nothing, but insists on leaving his own pipe, his knife, nay, a lucky sixpence—his whole fortune—with the family, as keepsakes. The veldt burns so hot in the sun that you cannot, with the bare hand, pick a vagrant knife from it, but hearts keep green and unscotched.

A Borderer and a Dutchman strike up a strange acquaintance across the Tugela. The Borderer goes to one bank to draw water for the poor fellows with wounds and parched lips. From the other bank a watchful Boer shows his Mauser and threatens to shoot. The Borderer waves a handkerchief, explains his mission, and all is mercy and peace. It might almost be the meeting, after a stiff battle, of two brothers who are from Lancashire. Each has thought the other dead, and the youngest sits crying as the eldest stumbles upon him. "You can guess the hand-shake we exchanged"; and indeed you can. Nobody is looking at them.

Of two brothers in another regiment one is taken and the other left, and so with friends who are brothers in all but blood. "Ged away, Bob," the first advises in his



ONE TOUCH OF NATURE

There is a Sunday afternoon truce at Mafeking, and T. A. and Brother B. come together for a smoke and a talk, which they like in common. Then they return to their respective trenches, and make good practice at each other.

hearty Lancashire, "before tha gets hit again." "Nod I," answers the wounded comrade. "Aw'm no'd leavin' thee, Jem." Yet he does, for a bullet runs through his head, and he has not even time to mutter a prayer. But what he has said is a noble prayer.

A lance-corporal of the Royal Fusiliers conjures up for us a wonderful watch-service. He and his comrades observe the Boers at their evening prayer-meeting, and, not to be outdone, themselves start singing hymns. "We had sung a grand old English hymn when one of the enemy advanced to within forty yards and asked us to sing it over again. It reminded him of his home, he said, and we concluded that he was British born. We sang it again." The return for this is a trifle, yet much to the soldier man. A dragoon has his horse shot under him, is made prisoner, and his captor is taking away his pipe with the other poor loot. "What are you doing?" a Boer chief snaps out. "You mustn't take his pipe—he won't be able to smoke."

Whoever captures, or is captured, the resulting picture is sure to be intimate and human. "Every prisoner I came across," a

soldier reports, "had a religious tract in his pocket." That is spiritual food.

A supply of bully-beef and bread is set before a bedraggled, famished commando of Boers who have been escorted into some camp. "Didn't they shake it," ready Atkins says of the food; "their best feed for many a long day."

We are reminded of a colonial who is asked by a regular, "Have you any scoff?" "No, none of the Government's; only my own." Next the regular asks, "Have you any bread?" "Bread! What do you mean? What's bread? What does it taste like?" "Oh," laughs the regular, "I've just got a loaf, and here's half for you." The faring tendered to a colonial will as readily be extended to a Boer, and a word added for sauce.

It is the sort of piquant sauce of which Atkins has an immense supply. Thus, a Highlander is happened upon, passing a crust and the news of the campaign with a Boer. "Tired of it, are you?" exclaims the Highlander; "why, you have only been fighting our advance guard yet." You should have seen his lip drop! Such is badinage of the Atkins brand.

Discipline and courage! These a Gordon Highlander blandly informs a curious Dutchman are what capture kopjes; and as for the Dutchman, we learn that he is proud to be taken prisoner by one of the world-famed Gordons! Everybody is satisfied; all is well. A second Gordon communicates the views of a second Boer also upon the Gordon men. "The 'kilties' are devils to fight." Their fury in the charge, their contempt of death are diabolical, and rough is the day's settling.

But there is no enmity in all this; it eventually takes us to the hand grip, and the exchange of plug tobacco. When the flare of the combat has died down, goodwill dwells with the combatants. Britons and Boers meet at the burial of the slain, and have a dolorous, consoling talk when that task is finished. Perhaps there is a piano in a house near by, and somebody plays "Home Sweet Home," in slow time.

"Very decent fellows, treated us very well," so Atkins jerks out, disturbing the music. "They were very good about water," we have the record in another letter, "giving us all they had, and fetching more from the bottom of the hill, a mile and a half away."

"We call them Boers," remarks a Northumberland Fusilier, "but they are anything but Boors."

"Since we have been with them," says a man who has been captured, "we have had almost any mortal thing except liberty." Those who wrestle on the veldt regard each other handsomely, and are slow to wrath and to the bitter word, knowing better. "We are brothers, we are men," they sing in the South, as is sung of "Nelson and the North." Grateful is the thought beside the ghastly machine of war; it helps to stanch the wounds.

"Our fellows," a linesman sets down, "treat the Boer wounded as if they were our own, and some of the Boers are much touched. I have seen us offer them our last drop of water, though we knew not where to find any more." A Highlander and a Boer are lying side by side, the former somewhat hurt, the latter badly. The Boer makes a sign, as if desiring a drink, and the Highlander hands him his flask, apologising that it contains nothing better than brackish water. A Hollander, with a bullet in his shoulder, is brought back to consciousness by a pull at an enemy's whisky flask. Next the friendly enemy digs

out the bullet with his knife, and ties up the wound with a handkerchief.

The instances of good-fellowship are endless. "Would you like something to drink?" a Boer asks a Gordon. Both have been smitten in the fray. "What have you got?" "A bottle of port wine." Each has a pull at it. "Now," continues the Gordon, "would you like something to eat?" "What have you got?" "A loaf of bread." "My goodness," says the Boer, "I haven't tasted bread for weeks." The stretcher-bearers find them at this communion, and almost hesitate to break in upon it.

A rifleman has a simple story of how, being already wounded, he is saved from annihilation. A brawny Boer, "fightin' mad," is girding at him, when a younger Boer interferes. The Berserk who wants fight, goes elsewhere to get it, and this is what follows for the rifleman:—

"The young Boer helped me up, and as the fall, and a bullet in the foot, had taken it all out of me, he propped me against a rock and gave me some water. Then he said, in very broken English, 'I save your life, do you know?' I nodded. He went on, 'You

know why I save your life?' I shook my head. He answered, 'Because you are like my brother.' He gave me a cigar, carried me on his back down the hill to near our camp, said 'They find you all right here,' shook my hand and bolted."

The practice of these good offices is not one-sided. The kind heart and the grateful one know not race distinction. "When I had emptied my bottle between a couple of wounded Boers," a private writes of Belmont, "a third one, a big chap about forty, rushed towards me and held out his hand, which I shook heartily. He did not speak a word, but I could see his lips quiver, and there were tears in his eyes." A member of the Medical Staff Corps comes upon a wounded Boer who is dying. There is little to be done, but "I put him in the shade, injected some morphia into his arm to ease the pain, and gave him some water."

Perhaps it is to this poor fellow that his wife has written, "Dear husband, you must promise me that if you are taken ill, you will come home at once. You must not be ill away from me." Unhappily, her empty house is to remain empty, and only a distant grave

is to be filled. Yet there are touches of sombre comfort on its black edge, as take these further witnesses:—

"The Boers sang a hymn over the grave and then shook hands with us before we parted."

"After the chaplain had read the burial service, a Boer who was standing by said, 'I hope you will have better luck next time.' We were too full of sorrow to reply."

"They helped us to dig the graves and to carry our dead, and one Boer stepped out and said a short prayer, hoping the war would soon end; and while we stood with heads uncovered they sang a hymn in Dutch. It cut our fellows up very much; in fact we could hardly speak for some time."

The graveside is the final, the all-conquering touch of Nature, but the morrow arrives with its calls, its duties, perhaps its laughter. Mostly, in the world, laughter overtakes sorrow, a well-ordered plan. But a rough-and-ready Lancashire soldier has no thought of making mirth when, as the shells rain at Kimberley, he addresses an eminent civilian, "Douk the nut, tha bloomin' fool." More deliberate is the message of a Boer signaller

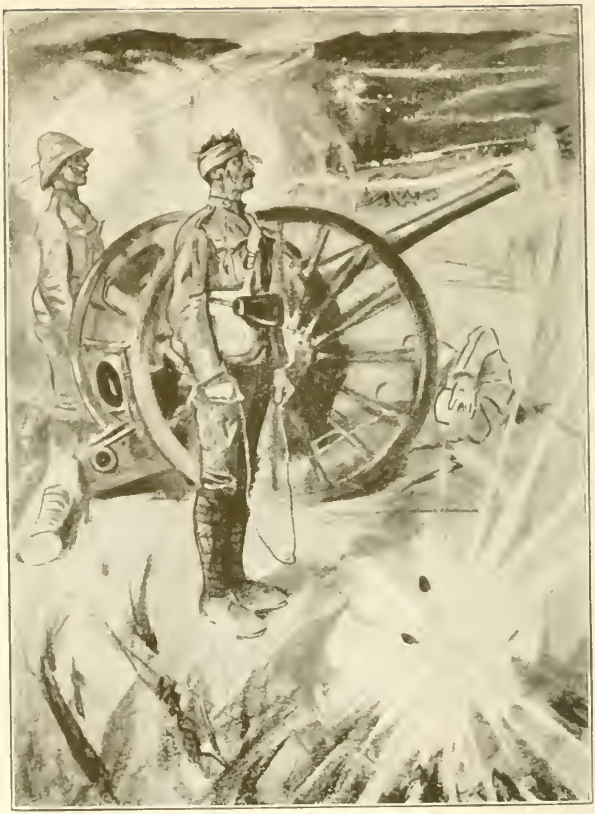
to the British, "A happy New Year to you," and the reply, "The same to you, and we'll add the compliments of the season when we meet."

Ah, what tales are told us! Actually we get a romance of a bar of soap which is greatly coveted by a soldier, who has not known soap for months. A buxom Dutch girl with, perhaps, a more rightful claim to the soap, lays a hand upon it. "All right, my dear," says Atkins, "you need it." She gets angry; so he adds, the rascal, but we know there has been no such incident. Simply it is a yarn circulated for the sake of the retort, thought to be so clever. Atkins will have his joke out, having once got it into his head, even if he should wreck his reputation for chivalry. He has the common failing for small wit.

Then there is excellent vain-glory in the elaborate tale of a scout, about a visit he pays to a farmhouse. He has orders to take the farmer away, a prisoner, but the "old man" has daughters who coax and cajole and weep in turn. "It was awfully nice," we are assured, "to have three plump Dutch girls kissing me, and I believe I should have given their father a chance. But when the old

woman wanted to help the girls in the kissing, I got hard-hearted, and yanked the old fellow off to the town." There is a fine detail here, but somehow it does not convince. It is limelight.

Atkins, being a natural fellow, is least convincing when he tries to be most so; a characteristic of some men and most women.



THE MEN ARE SPLENDID!

The incident here shown was probably the inspiration of the phrase. At Colenso all the gunners of a fifteen-pounder are shot, save two, who still keep loading and firing. They use up the emergency rounds of case, and, when nothing more can be done, stand to the "'Tention," and die as heroes should.

XII.—"THE MEN ARE SPLENDID!"

Some points in illustration of this, with general observations on Thomas Atkins, a man of parts.

"A MAN," says Carlyle, "shall and must be valiant; he must march forward and quit himself like a man, trusting imperturbably in the appointment and choice of the upper Powers, and, on the whole, not fear at all."

The spirit of this marching order directs, in no small measure, the every-day war life of the common soldier. He seeks to know his duty, let who will have the setting of it before him, and then he seeks to do it. "Oh," he says to himself, "that's the job, is it? Well, here goes." He has the inner faith, which is the dowry of sound manhood, and by it he walks. If the road takes him "over the hills and far away," he will return when he can.

The soldier may be likened to a young oak, in that he stands stubbornly to the blasts,

without crying the fact across the forest. The tree of knowledge, lifting its wealth of branches overhead, shakes and thunders in every breeze, a veritable monitor. "Hullo, old fellow," the pert, sinewy sapling looks up, "don't make such a row about it all. You'll be having a fall if you don't mind." That is Atkins, delivering himself of a parable for all whom it may concern. He is sharp of insight, if he be a townsman; not scarce of mother wisdom and long, slow views, if he be from the country. In either case he has the straps and pipe-clay of old custom to overcome. The wonder is that he does so well, this raw Samson of ours; only he has rare natural qualities.

The one that shines pre-eminent in the self-revelation of his epistles, is his cheeriness, his indomitable cheeriness of heart. He bubbles over with animal spirits; he is resolved to make the best of all things. He dwells in the glow of mirth, playfulness, fooling, call it what you will, which is bred of healthy spirits. The merry heart carries him all the day, over the veldt, up the kopje and down again, or through the rock-strewn kloof, when, without it, he would be tired in a mile. He looks

steadily into the bright face of the sun, forgetful of the heat which blisters his own.

This cheerfulness maintains him against troubles small or great, even if it must take a sardonic turn. " The times are hard," a soldier writes, " but it's a poor month in which we don't have one or two ' beanos ' wherewith to mark our respective birthdays." Here is the thrusting of trouble aside, the getting away from it, as a balloon rises into a serene sky. But another time that is not possible, and then a mocking philosophy, making molehills of mountains, is trained upon the difficulties. Suffering, peril, calamity, are met in the gate, with a joke or a jibe, the overcoming spirit indeed. Only let us find Atkins in one of those humours of splendid indifference to whatever may befall him.

A troop of lancers stand beside their horses, under a dripping sky, for a whole night, and in the morning they carol, " Oh, why left I my home! " They have it out with the weather, and as we see time after time, one of the deadliest moods of Atkins is when he becomes satirical. A number of infantrymen are selected to escort a big gun, a duty carry-

ing special risks, because the gun is a target tempting the enemy's fire. They think hard for a minute on learning their commission, and then raise their voices in chorus, "Now we shan't be long!" Off they march, to that good-bye from their comrades; it covers any display of the emotions. "Two deep, men!" shouts an officer, as the crossing of the bullet-churned Tugela is about to be attempted, and back comes the answer, "Bedad, an' it's too deep I am already!"

These light airs sail Atkins prosperously along, when a craft less buoyant than his would founder in the storms of warfare. He puffs and blows at his mast-head lights, keeping them ever clear and bright, to lead him on. The greater the gloom, the more he searches for the gleam:

> "Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
> The distant scene,—one step enough for me."

Nor does it fail him. We understand that by his stoical endurance on the march, his sure advance against a rain of lead, his urgent dash in the charge. These are traditional qualities, and they meet in a tenacity of purpose which suggests the flowing tide of the sea,

with some of its awesome violence. Atkins springs forward with a supple foot and puts it down heavily.

We have the first characteristic in the story of a bugler boy who packs his bugle out of sight, gets hold of a rifle, and hies him to the fighting line. There he is detected in his villainy, that of being still a boy, and turned back, but he appeals to the colonel, who says, " Well, he's a strong, willing lad, let him alone. He can get his bugle when it's over." And we have the second characteristic, the obstinate grip-and-growl, in the lamentations which rise from Atkins when he is ordered to retire from the impossible.

" The order came to retire," he tells us, " so back we had to come. As soon as they said ' Retire,' our hearts went—we were done up. While advancing we did not notice thirst, or distance, or tired limbs, but as we were marched back, and knew we were beaten, we felt it all. We just strolled off, being for one thing dead tired; some praying for a bullet to end their misery."

It is the valley of the shadow, but the soldier loves not to linger there, and we soon have him again on the heights. Self-respect,

pride in his uniform, regard for the fame of his regiment, all help him up the mountain side. There he climbs, sure-footed, with his colonial comrades, whom he delights to take under his wing, coo-oo-ing to them in zestful regard. He approves himself as the god-father of those young giants from oversea, and he has a gracious eye for them. "Bust me, mates," he exclaims when they wade through a fusillade, to the cracked music of a stray concertina—"bust me, mates, them blokes don't know what fear is!"

How touched we are to find ourselves, our qualities, even our defects, reflected in a young kinsman! But we like him to be one or two degrees removed, not to be, as it were, a possible rival in the household. He must be viewed with space about him, or we miss the attractive curves and fasten upon the harsh angles. Atkins reminds us of this. He is even inclined, for a time, to be jealous of the volunteer from the Old Country, thinking him a hothouse soldier, the spoiled darling of the man in the street.

"Did you ever hear such a thing?" says a regular about a visit to a camp of newly-arrived volunteers: "we two regulars ordered

away, when we called to shake hands with an old acquaintance! The sentry wasn't to blame, of course, having his orders, but what a pity some of them volunteers don't bring a glass case out with them, for there's a lot of dust about here."

Hotly sarcastic, a sure master of the barbed word, is Atkins on occasion, but the warrior-born volunteers of the homeland are soon taken to his heart. He and they squeeze behind some insufficient stone, on a plain where the dust is leaping up in little spouts, and he is jealous no more. There is no room for jealousy then. "What's the text for to-day?" A regular asks the question, and a volunteer draws forth a dog-eared volume, consults it, and reads, "I will be with him in trouble and deliver him." The words are comforting, for religion and resolution meet in the soldier, though he does not speak much of either.

His tongue may babble loose words, or worse, flinging back at the world what the world has taught him; but deep in his heart there is the reverence which betokens innate religious feeling. He does not call it that, even if he knows of its existence, yet it peeps

out in a score of ways. A bullet, well aimed at a sergeant, is stopped by a New Testament that he carries in the breast-pocket of his tunic. The talk of the camp that night is only of one thing, and there are pauses during which the soldiers stare into the embers of the fire.

Usually the camp-fire talk is of all things that have happened in the day, with excursions into what should have happened. Atkins is keen on strategy and tactics, and he expresses his criticism or praise in the manner of his particular people. Is he English? Then with a deft candour, a clear, gliding wit, which at once engage sympathy. Is he Scots? With a quick analysis, a thrust of reticent, reflective humour, or, if he be a Highlander, with an appeal to sentiment and the imagination. Is he an Irishman? He puts wisdom into a cap and bells, and is amazed when they get all the attention.

War emphasises race peculiarities. It also makes us familiar with the individual loyalty of the soldier towards his immediate officers. His captain, his colonel, his general—he will stand up for them valiantly against all other captains, colonels, and generals, especially if

they see that he is well fed. He holds fervently that an empty stomach is neither magnificent, nor war. He likes his little comforts, and towards those in high places who will have a care for them, he is grateful and he will repay.

Now, think of the joy which will possess a corps whose colonel emerges triumphant from a difficult passage with some general officer, his over-lord! The colonel has fallen upon an empty house and finds it cosy quarters; but the general officer commanding is fain to disturb him. One day the colonel gets the message, " G.O.C. wants your house." He is smitten with a similar desire to save words, and replies " G.O.C. can G.T.H." He is called upon to explain his contractions. That is very simple—" General Officer Commanding can Get The House." The corps chortles for a week.

The story may not show Atkins as altogether equal to the command, " When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing." He is very, very human. But he is earnest to do the right according to his lights, and in so far as he falls short of it, he recognises that

he is the loser. Still, frank shortcomings are often strands in the loves and friendships that warm the world. Perfection, since it needs nothing itself, has no channel by which it can give others anything, and so it is cold. Now coldness is the last sin to be charged against Atkins, for is he not in the furnace of war? Where its roaring heat does not burn, it may purify, turning dross into gold.

"If war brings out the brutal instincts," a reflective soldier writes, "it reveals the God-like also, for I have come across scores of instances of sacrifice, even unto death, among men who in times of peace are looked upon as almost worthless characters."

The book of human life is not plainer to us, amid the jangle of war, than it is at other times. Its secrets are not on the covers for the first eye to read, and to ask how war influences individual character, is to demand the scrolls of eternity. We merely have glimpses of stray pages, as they flutter for a minute in the winds of battle, and then are closed; but not until they have flung golden lights upon the black pall of war. That has been clear as we have followed the thoughts of the soldier, and seen him in his relations

with friend and foe. He acts the man towards both, giving kindness and receiving it, by the door of a simple heart. The little children of two races declare it when they turn him into a delighted school-boy, and make toys of his savage weapons. With easy confidence they dethrone the god of war, who smiles contentment, as well he may. Only those in whom there dwelleth some good may thus win the confidence of a child.

No light could be a safer guide to the common soldier in the strange tangle of feeling, experience, thought, with which war invests him. His sensations link this world with the next, the known with the unknown. Much we can perceive, not all. Yonder is the sky-line.

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